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The City's comprehensive plan, "Framework for the Future," which was adopted by City Council in June 2001, cites poor development quality and unattractive visual appearance of a number of its city streets, including Warwick Boulevard. The comprehensive plan recommended the preparation of corridor plans "to identify improvements to the visual quality and traffic flow, and reducing the chaotic signage, multiple commercial entrances and overhead utilities." The Planning District III Plan in the "Framework for the Future" recommended improving Warwick Boulevard, reducing and consolidating its commercial entrances, improving the visual quality of commercial strips, providing quality landscaping, removing overhead wires, and providing better sign control¹. The plan advocates a study to "ensure a higher degree of landscaping, better sign control, and the construction of quality structures."

The City has invested substantial public funds within the corridor as represented by the building of the new Mary Passage Middle School, the new Waterworks Maintenance Building and upgrade of the Lee Hall Treatment Plant. In the near future, additional investments are planned in the City's Capital Improvements Program for Stoney Run Park, including a new five ball field complex and other improvements to Stoney Run Park, and construction of a second access road to Ft. Eustis. Careful planning and more attractive development and redevelopment within the corridor are desired to protect this public investment and attract private development.

The comprehensive plan recommends the preparation of corridor plans "to identify improvements to the visual quality and traffic flow, and reducing the chaotic signage, multiple driveways and overhead utilities."

¹ Framework for the Future, pg. 14.8, City of Newport News, Va., adopted on June 26, 2001

SUMMARY



Warwick Boulevard & Bland Boulevard

The Warwick Boulevard corridor (North Denbigh), from Oyster Point Road to Fort Eustis Boulevard, has become one of the most blighted commercial districts in the City of Newport News. Factors contributing to its run down physical appearance include strip malls with large vacant stores, poor building quality, cheaply constructed housing and apartments, poorly controlled and excessive commercial signage, excessive curb cuts, and the absence of any thoughtful physical design relationship between the street and the adjoining businesses. As with most aging retail corridors, the North Denbigh section of Warwick Boulevard has seen a decline in retail activity and investment over the last few decades. Consequently, the City has embarked upon an effort to study the existing issues and commit to revitalizing the corridor. The City recognizes a sense of urgency for this endeavor and the need for action in its determined effort to prevent further deterioration, vacancies, and abandonment in the corridor to accomplish its objective of commercial corridor revitalization.

Summary (Cont.)

Though much of the City's recent development activity is occurring in the mid-town area of Oyster Point, areas such as the Warwick Boulevard Corridor present many important redevelopment opportunities. However, the initial challenge before the residents, landowners, public officials, and business people has been to assess the existing conditions and current trends. In addition to assessing the corridor's existing conditions, a goal of this study is to make recommendations that will be used to establish a focus for public officials when considering new and redeveloped property along the corridor and funding priorities. Over time, it is anticipated that this study will serve as a reference to all who will shape the corridor through future decisions and actions. It will also provide a foundation for a community partnership to begin working together to implement the study's recommendations to achieve long term vitality for the area as mixed use business areas, emphasis of unique natural features, and overall improvement of the aesthetic appearance.



Key Issues

Important issues addressed in the Warwick Boulevard Corridor Study are listed to the right...➔.

Recommendations of this study are intended to improve the vitality and redevelopment opportunities of the corridor by enhancing its aesthetic appeal. The desired result would reverse the trend toward business activity decline and reduced investments.

Establishing the framework for a Landscape Character

Aesthetic Improvements for Public Rights-of Way

Shopping Center Revitalization Opportunities

Analyze the physical appearance of Warwick Boulevard and adjoining development between Ft. Eustis Boulevard and Menchville Road (identify potential aesthetic enhancements and reduce visual clutter)

- Identify and recommend opportunities for redevelopment
- Propose street design enhancements to improve the corridor's appearance
- Recommend strategies for redevelopment
- Recommend new standards for commercial signs
- Prepare landscape plans and design standards
- Include Implementation Recommendations
- Identify role of city government
- Proposes the development and initiation of a unified landscape character. Build upon existing strengths of the corridor and connections to the surrounding residential communities. Protect the natural landscape features (such as Stoney Run Creek and the Warwick River) so that the enhancement and preservation of these areas can be integrated in future development.
- Recommends opportunities to improve the City's public right-of-way to enhance the visual attractiveness of the corridor and encourage revitalization through public and private investments.
- Provides recommendations regarding the strip commercial and neighborhood centers at prime locations within the corridor. Promotes efficient access and combines an appropriate scale of activities which may include retail, residential, offices and community facilities.

- Identifies opportunities to improve the attractiveness and market image of the corridor's established business areas through coordinated landscaping efforts and other visual improvements, e.g., a corridor beautification committee and business association, and tax deductible site and structure improvements program.
- Identifies other opportunities for future redevelopment that will be compatible with surrounding single family residential and enhance the corridor.

Stoney Run

- Recommends a compact, yet fully integrated mixed use development located at the northeast corner of Oriana Road's intersection with Warwick Boulevard. The proposed activity would encourage social interaction and have a pedestrian oriented centralized commercial activity with adjoining park space (Stoney Run Park). The residential element of such a plan would fill a growing demand in the City for affordable quality housing.

Multi-modal Transportation Improvements

- Enhance the pedestrian support facilities along Warwick Boulevard to include transit bus shelters. Bus lanes, and/or graffiti-proof benches, handicap access and pedestrian crosswalks. Limit curb cuts and lengthen turn lanes where necessary. Repair and widening of the existing sidewalks is needed to provide for pedestrian travel.

Implementation Strategies

- Foster joint cooperation between major stakeholders representing a range of public and private sector interests that could facilitate the aesthetic enhancement and business climate revitalization efforts. Recommend the formation of a corridor improvement association implementation group. Develop a plan to address absentee landowners through community associations.

INTRODUCTION

As Newport News has evolved, the pattern of development along the Warwick Boulevard north Denbigh corridor, from Oyster Point Road to Ft. Eustis Boulevard, can be defined as haphazard and has lacked a unified aesthetic vision (See Existing Land Use Map). Once a main thoroughfare through predominately a rural area of the City, the corridor (an Urban Minor Arterial) now provides access primarily to residential subdivisions and to *decreasing* commercial services: Most major shopping and employment centers are located elsewhere in the City (Jefferson Avenue midtown corridor). An established area, the north Denbigh corridor presents many opportunities, as well as numerous challenges for redevelopment.

The various elements of the study reveal an in-depth examination into the existing condition of the Warwick Boulevard corridor and provide specific measures suggested to enhance its potential as a quality place for living and working. The City's comprehensive plan, "*Framework for the Future*," adopted by City Council in June 2001, cites poor development quality and unattractive visual appearance of a number of its city streets, including Warwick Boulevard. The comprehensive plan recommends the preparation of corridor plans "to identify improvements to the visual quality and traffic flow, and reducing the chaotic signage, multiple driveways and overhead utilities." The Planning District III Plan in the *Framework for the Future* recommends improving Warwick Boulevard, reducing and consolidating its driveways, improving the visual quality of commercial strips, providing quality landscaping, removing overhead wires, and providing better sign control². The plan advocates creating a Highway Corridor Overlay District along Warwick Boulevard to "ensure a higher degree of landscaping, better sign control, and the construction of quality structures."

The visual appearance of Warwick Boulevard is a concern of the City Council. On November 21, 2001, the City Council directed the City Manager to initiate a "comprehensive revitalization planning process" for the Warwick Boulevard corridor between Oyster Point Road and Ft. Eustis

² *Framework for the Future*, pg. 14.8, City of Newport News, Va., adopted on June 26, 2001

INTRODUCTION (cont.)

Boulevard. The poor physical appearance of the corridor starts to become really discernible around Menchville Road. It is feared that the decline of Warwick Boulevard will continue to adversely impact adjoining residential areas and lead to further building deterioration, vacancies, and abandonment in the corridor.

It is important to note that the City has invested substantial public funds in the corridor through the construction of Mary Passage Middle School, the City of Newport News Waterworks Maintenance Building, and a major upgrade of the Lee Hall Treatment Plant (see also continuing initiatives and Past Accomplishments). In the near future, additional investments are planned in the City's Capital Improvements Program for creating Stoney Run Park, including a new five ball field complex and other improvements to Stoney Run Park, and construction of a second access road to Ft. Eustis. Careful planning and more attractive development in the corridor are desired to protect this public investment and attract private development.

This comprehensive study is intended to serve as a guide to the public officials, landowners, business community, and citizens. These groups will ultimately shape the area through future decisions. Within the *Framework for the Future*, there will be increased potential for achieving long-term vitality for the corridor.

Finally, this study is the result of a shared effort representing varied perspectives and knowledge of the citizens and City staff who participated. The study represents a continuing process that requires periodic review and assessment as new situations and opportunities occur.

Study Goal

“To analyze the existing conditions of the corridor and to provide recommendations to City leaders and citizens that when implemented will result in the aesthetic and commercial revitalization of the corridor and its surrounding environs.”

The desired result seeks to improve the overall quality of life for the citizens of Newport News. The accomplishment of this ambitious goal requires a sustained effort by City leaders, citizens, and all major stakeholders to implement the study's recommendations



Warwick Boulevard near intersection with Lucas Creek Road.

Objectives

The objectives listed to the right were developed from an initial survey with property/business owners and a citizen public meeting. These objectives must be aligned with a comprehensive implementation process if real physical improvements and positive change are to be realized for the Warwick Boulevard North Denbigh Corridor.

Enhance the streetscape and aesthetic qualities of Warwick Boulevard as a means to improve the overall attractiveness and economic prosperity of the corridor.

- Develop and implement landscape plans for the corridor.
- Establish a strong sense of aesthetic quality and civic pride.
- Promote harmonious site planning, landscape design for new development, and encourage aesthetic improvements on existing properties.
- Encourage neighborhood and community focal points.
- Encourage community involvement.

Ensure that the redevelopment of properties (e.g. conditional use, special exception permits, and infill properties) within the corridor is compatible with the scale and character of adjacent neighborhoods as well as adjoining land uses.

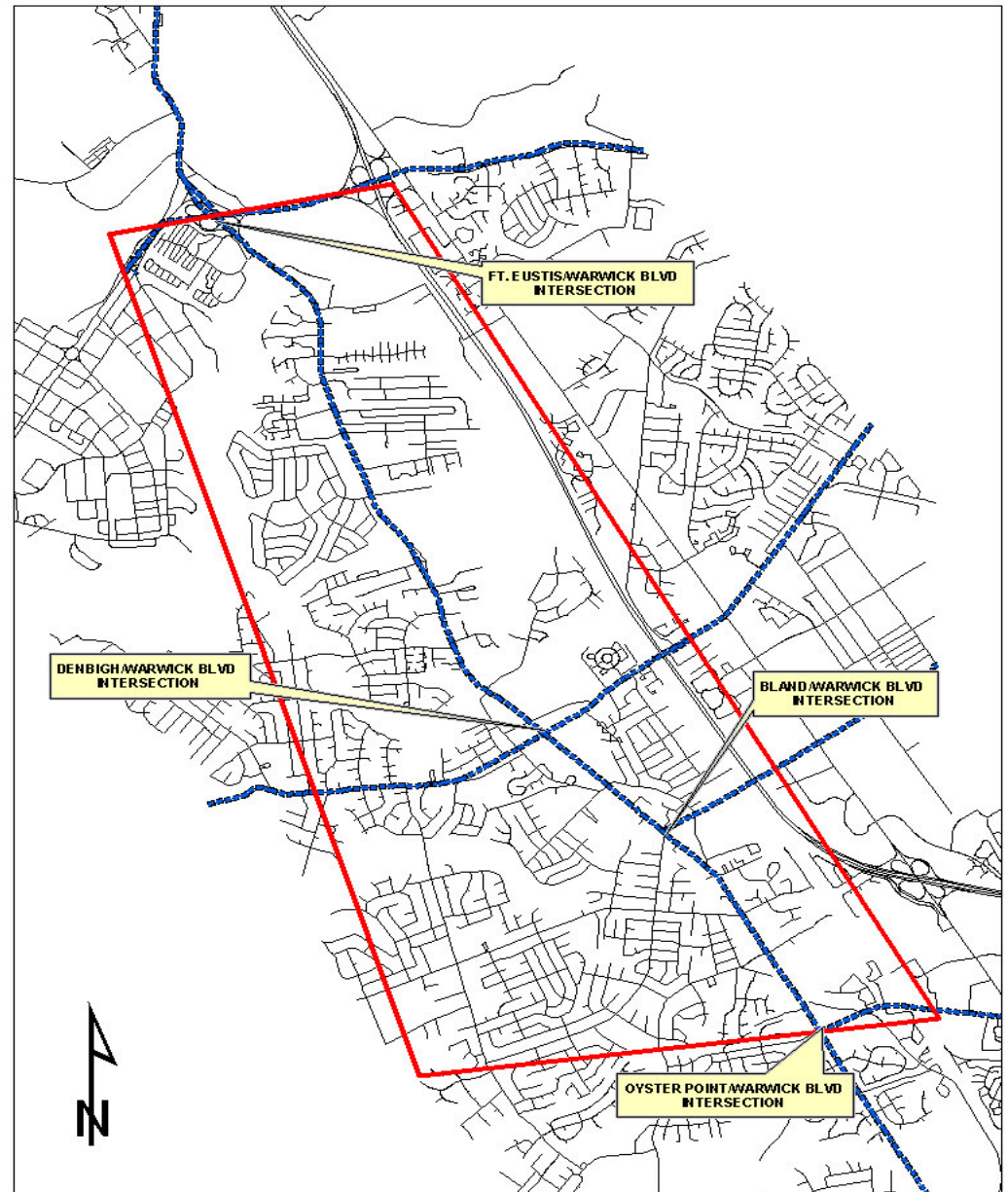
- Develop strategies that create an environment for successful redevelopment opportunities and strategic infill. Promote an efficient and compatible redevelopment strategy that establishes a community focal point in the Corridor (gateways).
- Increase business patronage through public commitment, investments, and partnerships.
- Minimize corridor impacts to existing environmental features.

Support improvements to existing infrastructure and community facilities.

- Recommend public improvements to the City's right-of-way
- Provide for necessary public improvements and community services to reflect demographic changes and market demand.
- Increase pedestrian and traffic safety.
- Enhance public transit access and facilities.

Corridor Location

The Warwick Boulevard Corridor Study area is located in the northern end of the City of Newport News. Beginning at the intersection Oyster Point Road and Warwick Boulevard, it extends approximately 5.8 miles north to Fort Eustis Boulevard. (See map at right) Major cross-streets within the corridor include Bland Boulevard, Denbigh Boulevard, and Industrial Park Drive. These cross-streets funnel traffic west to east from the Warwick Boulevard corridor to the Jefferson Avenue corridor, and beyond to access points for Interstate 64. In the City's long-range transportation plan, Atkinson Way (adjacent to Mary Passage Middle School) would create an additional cross street and help relieve the congested corridor.



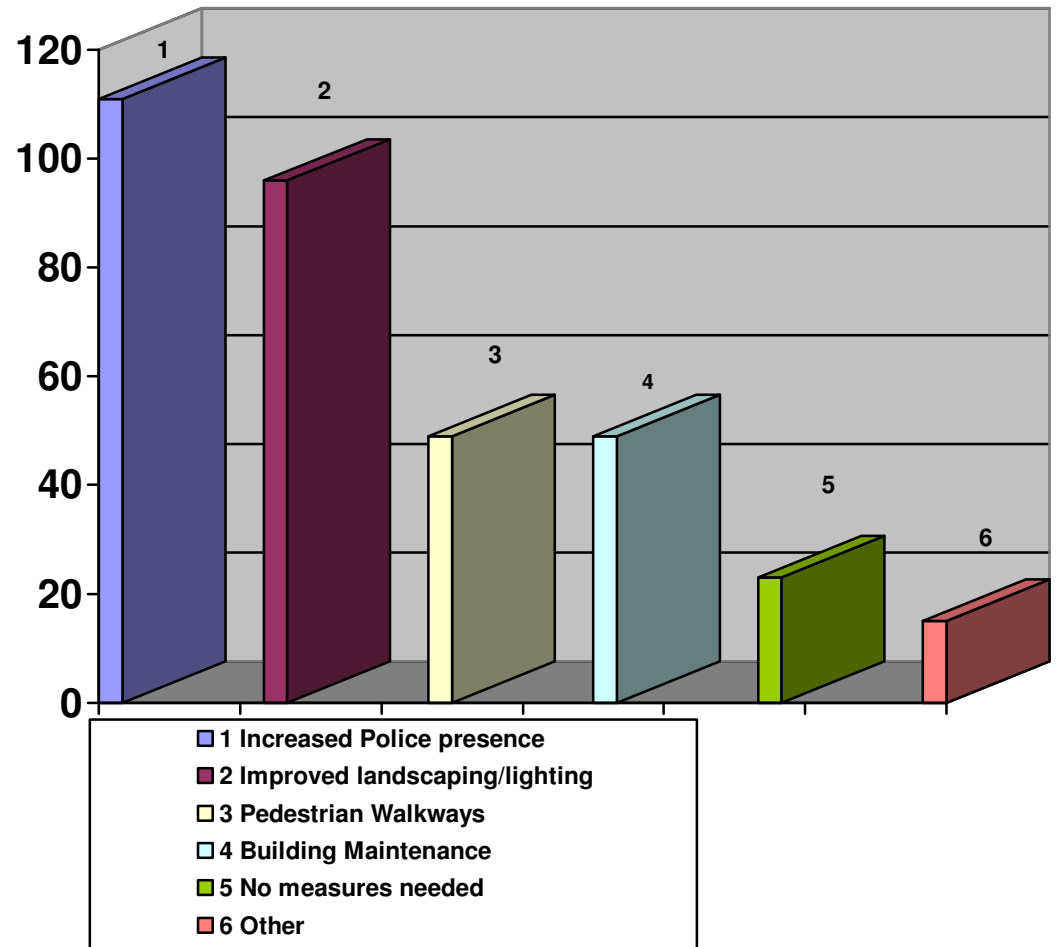
Map – corridor location

Major components

Citizen Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies the important contributions obtained from the citizens and major stakeholders throughout the study area.
Existing Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describes the current condition of the corridor.
Findings and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describes the existing problems based on the analysis by City staff and input from citizens through public meetings and a survey of property and business owners.
Ongoing Initiatives and Past Accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The City has operated under a sustained effort to focus its resources and programs on comprehensive improvements to this area of the City and its adjoining residential communities.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline ways to achieve the main goal of the study and present related actions that should be taken to implement its various elements.
Implementation Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Propose steps to carry out recommendations of the study and to remedy problems/issues to the extent possible recognizing city fiscal constraints and private property considerations.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizen participation is an important element of this study. Recommendations contained herein reflect this valuable input which was solicited by City staff. A Warwick Boulevard Corridor survey was conducted in August 2002 in order to solicit input regarding the current problems and opportunities along the corridor and to reveal potential solutions. Meetings were sponsored by the City of Newport News Planning Department to provide a forum for the public to share ideas and information, and to provide input to City staff. At initial public meetings, citizens helped identify problems and opportunities that are present within the study area. A second public meeting gave citizens opportunities to provide feedback regarding the City's recommendations. Through public involvement activities that included community meetings, area residents and property owners assisted in the development of the Corridor Study.



Sample of Warwick Boulevard Corridor Survey Results

The Survey

During the summer of 2002, a survey was conducted addressing the condition of Warwick Boulevard in the Denbigh area of the city. The need for this survey was based on anecdotal evidence gathered through site visitation and a review of real estate records that indicated that this area was in decline. In order to validate or dispel this observation, the thoughts and opinions of those who work and live in the area were needed. To this end 503 surveys were sent and 188 were returned. This 37% response rate was nearly four times the expected norm of 10%, indicating a high level of interest by those contacted.

The survey validated the perception of an area in decline. A majority of respondents (67%) stated dissatisfaction with the business climate and the overall visual appearance of Warwick Boulevard. Recurring themes within the survey results addressed fundamental issues such as traffic, codes compliance, public safety and landscaping.

Some findings of interest were that 63% of the respondents have been affiliated with the area for more than eleven years and 62% were business owners. 24% stated a combination of business and property ownership.

“503 surveys were mailed and 188 were returned. This 37% response rate was nearly four times the expected norm of 10%, indicating a high level of interest”

The Survey results indicated that nearly two-thirds (2/3) of respondents stated that improvements in cleanliness and visual clutter were needed. Citizens expressed consistent dissatisfaction with the corridor's existing conditions. The keen interest of the respondents can be attributed to the fact that 75% plan to continue ownership of their business and/or property in the future and 12% plan to make improvements. Only 9% stated consideration for leaving the study area altogether. Appendix A contains the complete survey and results. Also included are the unabridged open-ended responses and comments. Open-ended comments allowed citizens to voice concerns and opinions not directly addressed in the formal survey.

A second public meeting gave citizens opportunities to provide feedback regarding the City's recommendations. Through public involvement activities that included community meetings, area residents and property owners assisted in the development of the corridor study and its recommendations.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Analysis of existing conditions in the Warwick Boulevard corridor, including information generated through a property/business owner survey, identified planning issues and factors. An understanding of the characteristics and trends that influence development and redevelopment potential in the area provides a sound basis for planning and policy decisions and study recommendations that will shape the corridor's future. The following key factors are highlighted from these reports:

Demographic and Economic Analysis

Analysis of data from the 2000 U.S. Census presents a useful profile of the study area's population and economic trends. Although some of this data describes population trends in the larger corridor market area (See Map), these circumstances are expected to influence the study area and its revitalization potential.

Population Growth

The study area is comprised of nine (9) Census Tracts and their respective total populations are reflected on the Census Population map as shown on pg. 26. According to the 2000 Census, the total population of the study area is 54,237 residents. Compared to the 1990 Census figures, this population has remained unchanged. The population includes military personnel living on the Fort Eustis military reservation. Although the total population of the City has increased, recent Census data indicates that the population in the study area has remained steady. However, several other factors have influenced the area including the overall decrease in the average family size (national trend), other changing demographics, the continued relocation of the upper and middle class to the suburbs (the Counties of York, James City, New Kent, and cities on the Southside), and changes to the housing market demands by families. Some shifts have been offset by increases in the availability of the multi-family housing market. As mentioned further in the analysis, the study area has seen increases in the construction of the multi-family market over the last two decades.

Median Age

Overall, the median age of the study area has increased from 29.8 years in 1990, to 32.1 years in 2000. Although a slight increase (2.3%), the increased median age does reflect national trends of an aging “Baby Boomer” generation. Other factors contributing to these figures may include younger families relocating to suburbs from multi-family housing and natural age increases in the lesser transient “aging in place” neighborhoods.

Income

Large disparities exist in the *Median Household Income* in the study area (See map p.27). Depending on the Census Tract, Median Household Income is as high as \$71,786 (See Census Tract 320.01), and as low \$29,208 (See Census Tract 322.12). The lower incomes are mostly prevalent immediately adjacent to, and east of the corridor. The income disparities exist in part because of housing stock (multi-family-vs.-single family detached)³, concentrated areas of transient populations, and overall degradation and decline of the corridor and its tax base.

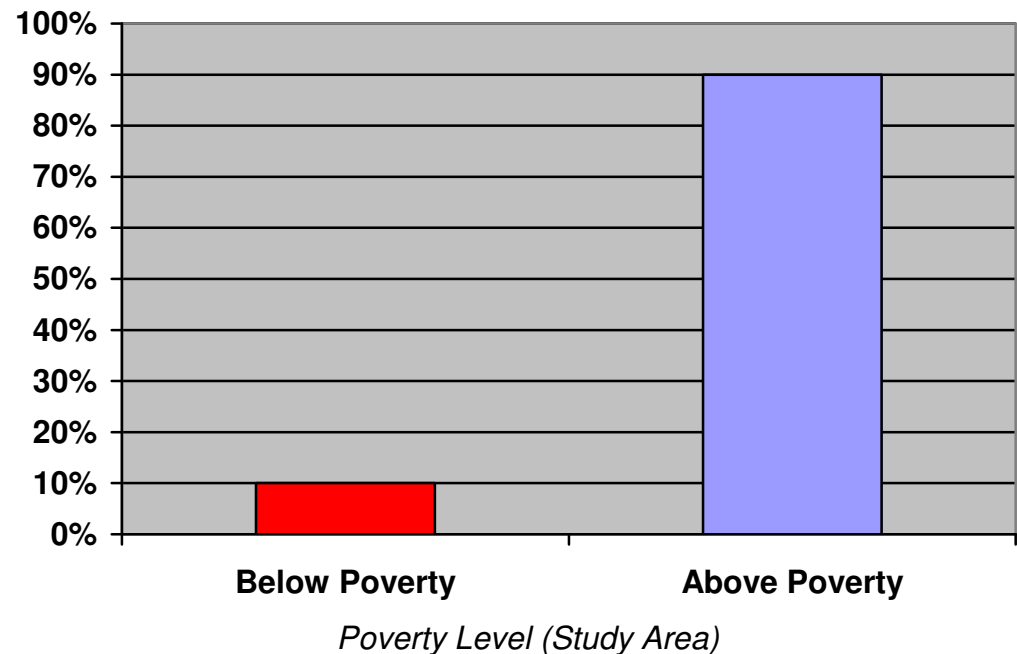
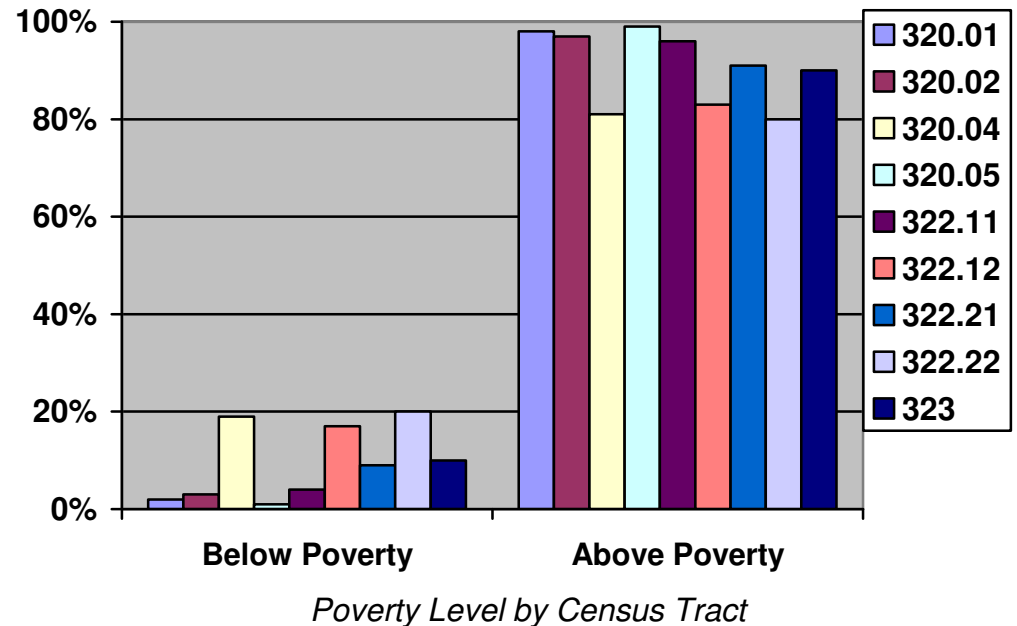
Approximately ten percent (10%) of the study area’s population are at or below the poverty level status. Poverty levels are defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and change each year depending on variables related to national economic conditions, family size, and wage rates. For example, for the year 2002, a single person would be classified as poverty level status if they earned less than \$9,359 per year. For a family of three, the poverty threshold would be \$18,307 per year. Using information and data derived from the 2000 Census, over 5,000 residents within the Study area are at or below the poverty level. Most noteworthy, the percentages of those below the poverty level status tend to be concentrated in the following three Census Tracts: 320.04, 322.12, and 322.22 (See Census Tract Map) The chart below breaks down the percentages that are below the poverty level status within each Census Tract. On the ensuing graph, the total poverty level is shown for the study area. The Census Tracts with the highest percentage of poverty levels are those areas with high concentrations of subsidized housing, multi-family housing, and higher percentages of rental properties.

³ Citizens occupying multi-family housing tend to be single and/or lower income wage earners.

Employment

Employment varies within the Study area, and there are a several major employment centers that attract workers to the area. Past employment figures indicate that a majority of residents are employed by the Department of Defense (DOD) or a defense related industry. These include active duty, reserve, and civil service personnel at the following military reservations: Fort Eustis, Fort Monroe, Langley Air Force Base, and the Naval Weapons Station in Yorktown. Other DOD related employment centers include the Northrop Grumman Shipyard, the Army and Air Force Exchange Systems (AAFES) in Oakland Industrial Park, and private sector businesses that complement defense related employment.

As indicated in the demographic data, unemployment for the area fell from 6.4% in 1990 to 5.5% as reported in the 2000 Census. These figures may not reflect the recent national economic conditions which may have actually increased unemployment figures. It is worth noting, however, that the Hampton Roads region as a whole generally holds a steady low unemployment rate because of the stable defense related job opportunities within the sectors of employment.

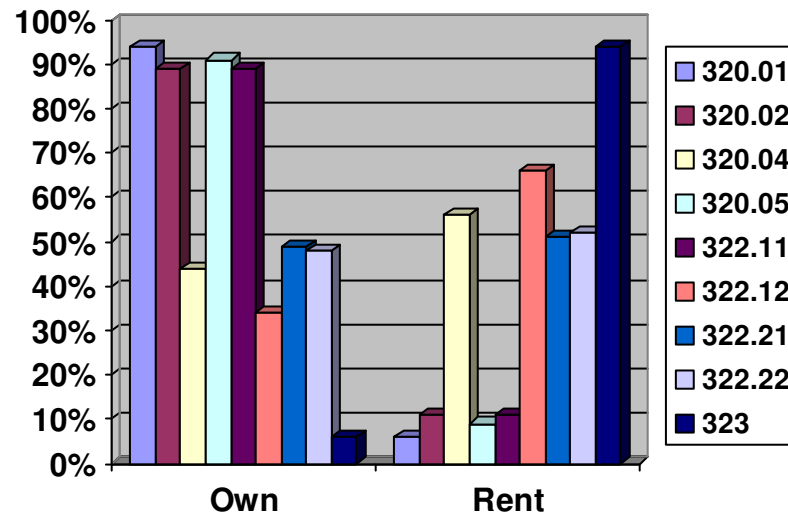


Homeownership

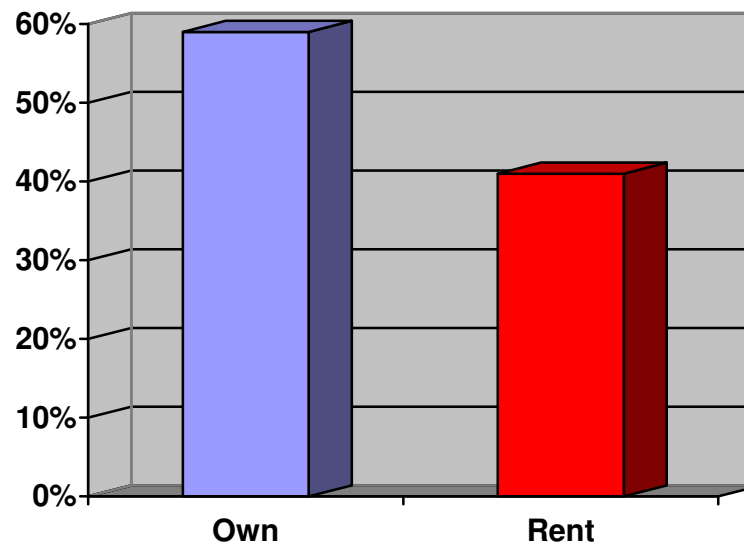
Because of the large presence of multi-family housing and rental properties, homeownership in the area has proportionally declined. Other factors that have contributed to this trend include a transient population, the natural cycle of aging communities, and the aging of the housing stock. All these factors contribute to the decline in housing values.

As the charts to the right indicate, rental properties in the study area exceed forty percent (40%) of total residential units. Homeownership can be a determining factor in the community's long-term efforts to revitalize the corridor. It is also indicative of the abundance of multi-family housing which is typically a leased dwelling unit. Without major improvements and redevelopment, the natural cycle of aging housing stock steadily shifts the character of neighborhoods from homeownership to rental properties.

A disproportionate amount of multi-family rental property exists in a community that was originally developed using single family housing as a base land use.



*Homeownership-Census Tract
(See Census Map)*

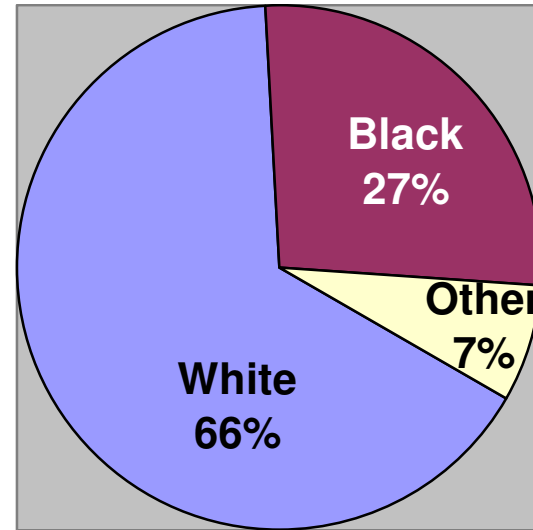


Homeownership in Study Area

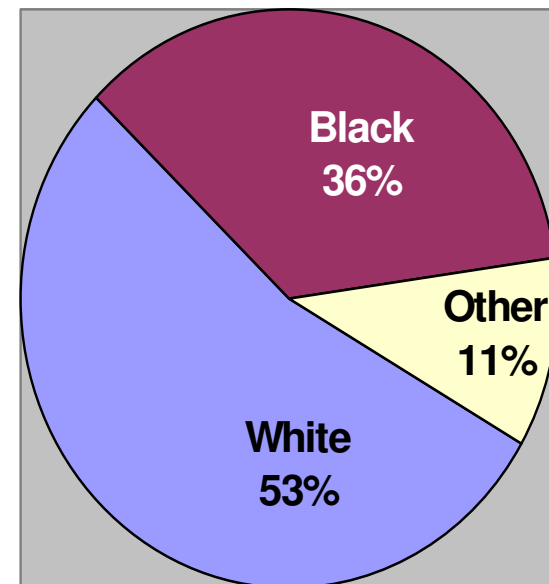
Racial Composition

As indicated by the graphs on the right, the percentage of the white population has decreased from 65.8% in the 1990 Census, to 53.9% in the 2000 Census -- an 11.9% decrease. However, it must be noted that the 1990 Census did not offer survey categories for multi-racial populations, as well as other more defining ethnic backgrounds. Multi-racial and other categories were added to the 2000 Census that provided survey respondents more options to choose when indicating their racial ethnicity. Consequently, although there was a decrease in the white population in the study area, a percentage of the decrease may be a result of the respondent's opportunity to more accurately define their ethnic background in the 2000 Census.

According to the 2000 Census definition of racial categories, the definition of the racial category has changed. The 2000 Census offered more racial categories, such as dual and multi-racial categories.



1990 Racial Composition



2000 Racial Composition

1990 to 2000 Population Change by Census Tract					
Warwick Boulevard Corridor Study Area					
1990 Census Tracts	2000 Census Tracts	1990 Population	2000 Population	1990 - 2000 # Change	1990 - 2000 % Change
320.01	320.01	2,841	3,001	160	5.6%
320.02	320.02	4,529	5,868	1,339	29.6%
320.03	320.04 / 320.05	10,243	10,385	142	1.4%
322.11	322.11	6,812	6,723	-89	-1.3%
322.12	322.12	4,251	4,243	-8	-0.2%
322.21	322.21	8,929	10,424	1,495	16.7%
322.22	322.22	6,668	7,855	1,187	17.8%
323	323	9,967	5,738	-4,229	-42.4%
Total		54,240	54,237	-3	0.0%

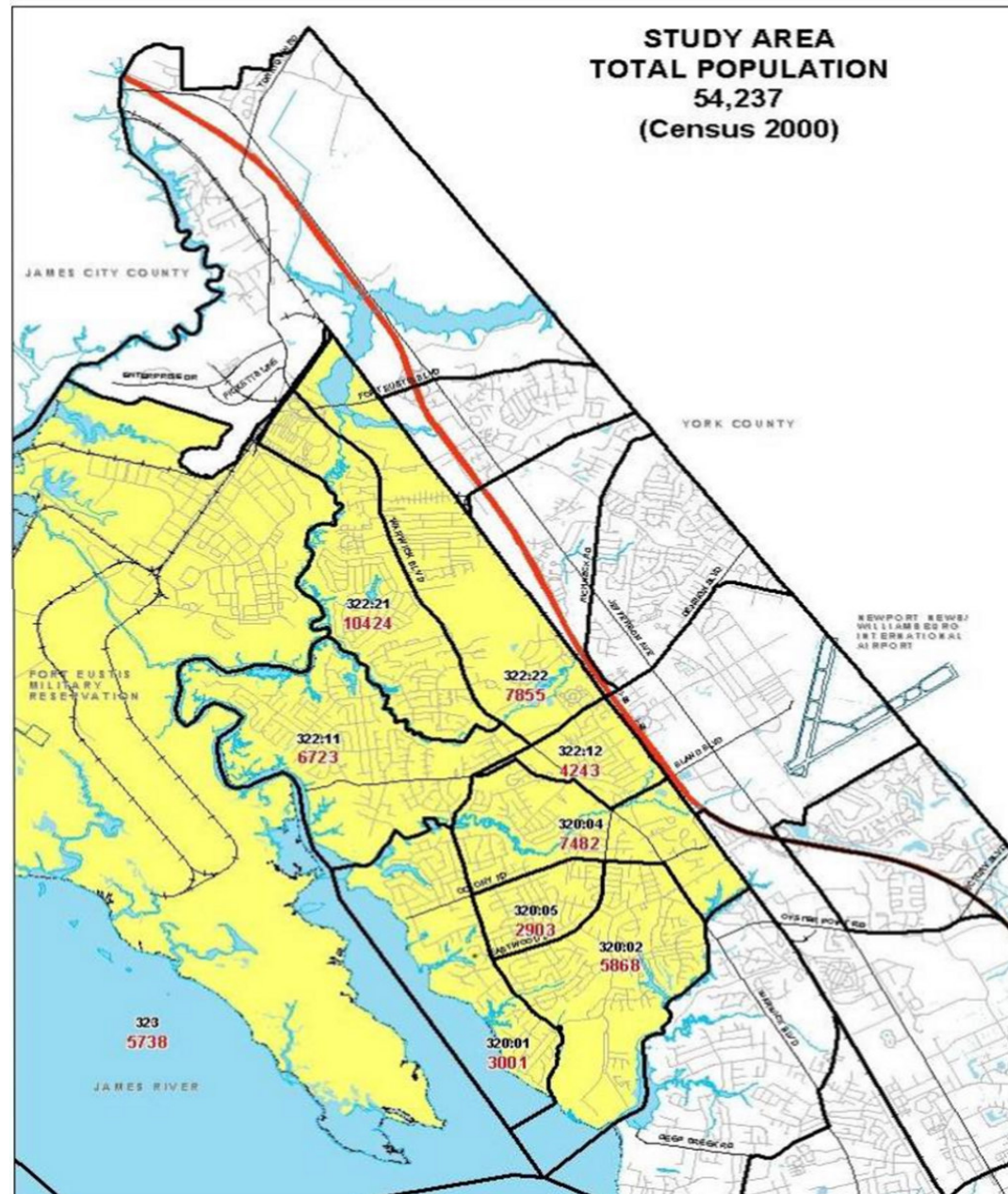
*Population Change by Census Tracts
(See Census Tract map)*

1990 to 2000 Demographic Change by Census Tract					
Warwick Boulevard Corridor Study Area					
1990 Census Tracts	2000 Census Tracts	1990	2000	1990	2000
		Median Age		Unemployment rate	
320.01	320.01	41.6	45.2	4.5%	3.2%
320.02	320.02	32.4	35.0	2.5%	3.2%
320.03	320.04 / 320.05	27.9	33.2	8.8%	5.3%
322.11	322.11	34.0	38.8	3.0%	3.8%
322.12	322.12	26.8	27.1	8.1%	10.3%
322.21	322.21	27.1	28.9	6.1%	6.5%
322.22	322.22	26.6	27.0	8.0%	7.6%
323	323	22.0	21.9	9.8%	4.0%
Total		29.8	32.1	6.4%	5.5%

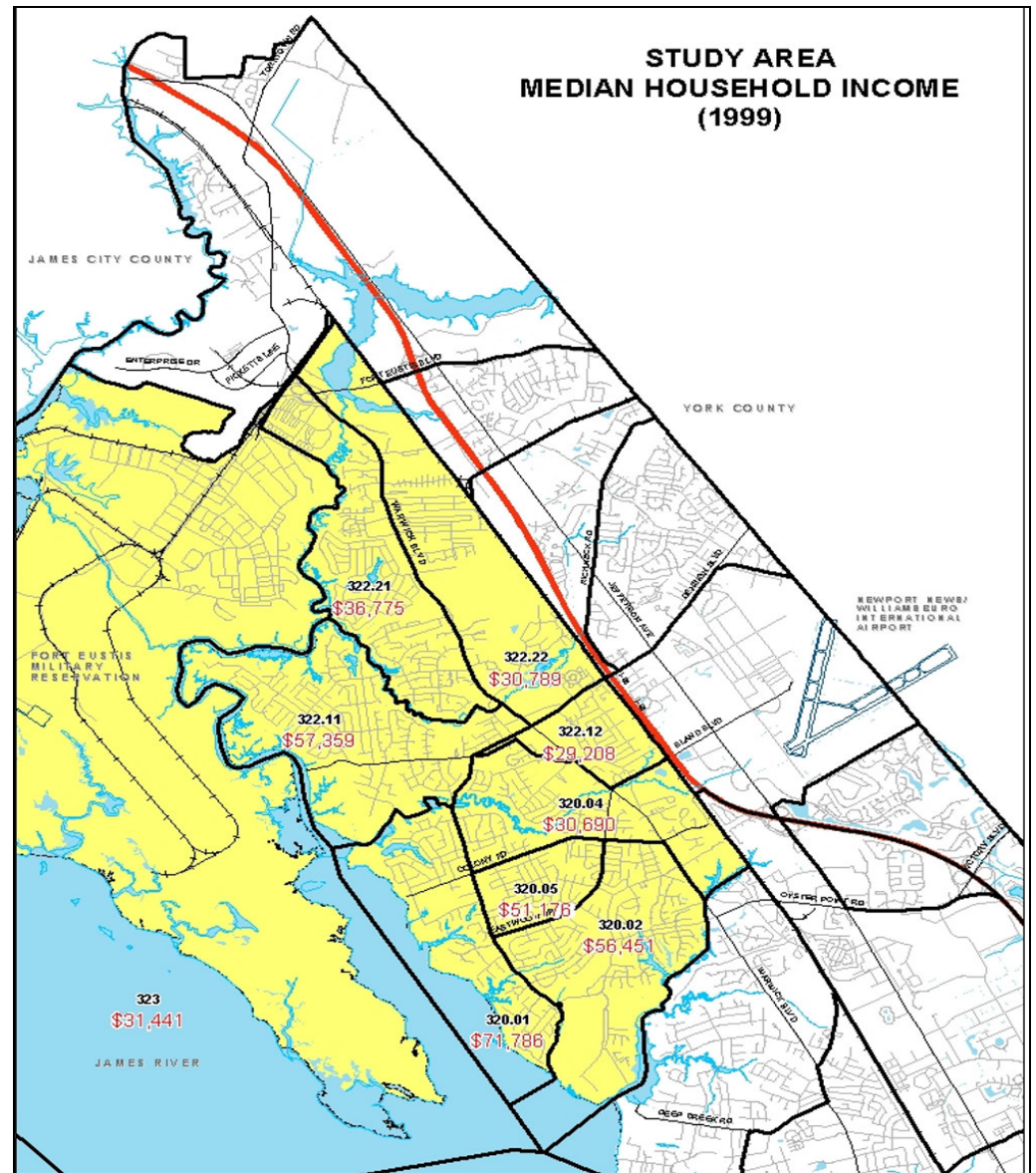
Demographic Change by Census Tract

Map - Study Area Population

The Total Population of the study area has remained stable between the last Census counts. However, population shifts have occurred between Census Tracts.



Map - Median Household Income by Census Tract



MARKET ANALYSIS

The Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in the North Denbigh neighborhood of Newport News has been in a state of decline for the past decade. This is the primary commercial corridor serving the everyday shopping needs of residents within the corridor area and the families who are stationed at the U.S. Army's base at Fort Eustis. Fort Eustis has announced a major upgrade to on-base housing that will be taking place during the next ten years, as well as the construction of a second entrance that connects the base directly to the commercial corridor. Therefore, revitalizing the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh is important to provide the quality of life that the City is seeking for its residents.

"The decline of the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh has been documented through lagging real estate property tax assessments and increased crime rates"

The decline of the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh has been documented through lagging real estate property tax assessments and increased crime rates (see Economic Impact pg. 31). Significant and negative socio-demographic changes have also occurred in the neighborhoods surrounding the commercial corridor during the past decade. These changes have contributed to the decline of the commercial corridor while, as pointed out below, the decline of the commercial corridor also contributes to the further destabilization of the mixed-income character of the North Denbigh neighborhoods.



Warwick Boulevard approaching Denbigh near Campbell Road

Demographic Changes

Between 1990 and 2000, according to U.S. Census data, average household income within the North Denbigh census tracts that adjoin the corridor (including Fort Eustis) rose more gradually than those of the City of Newport News, as a whole (28.2% versus 33.2%) so that, by 2000, average household income was 94.6% of the citywide average and only 81.5% of the metropolitan area average. Similarly, per capita income rose by only 29.4%, compared to 40.4% citywide, reducing the neighborhood's average per capita income to only 83.4% of the citywide average and only 73.2% of the metropolitan area average.

While the percentage of people living below the poverty line fell modestly (by 0.2%) from 1990 to 2000, citywide, it rose by 2.6% in the North Denbigh neighborhoods. The number of female-headed households in the North Denbigh neighborhoods rose by 81.5% during the decade, while the number of female-headed households citywide rose by only 26%.

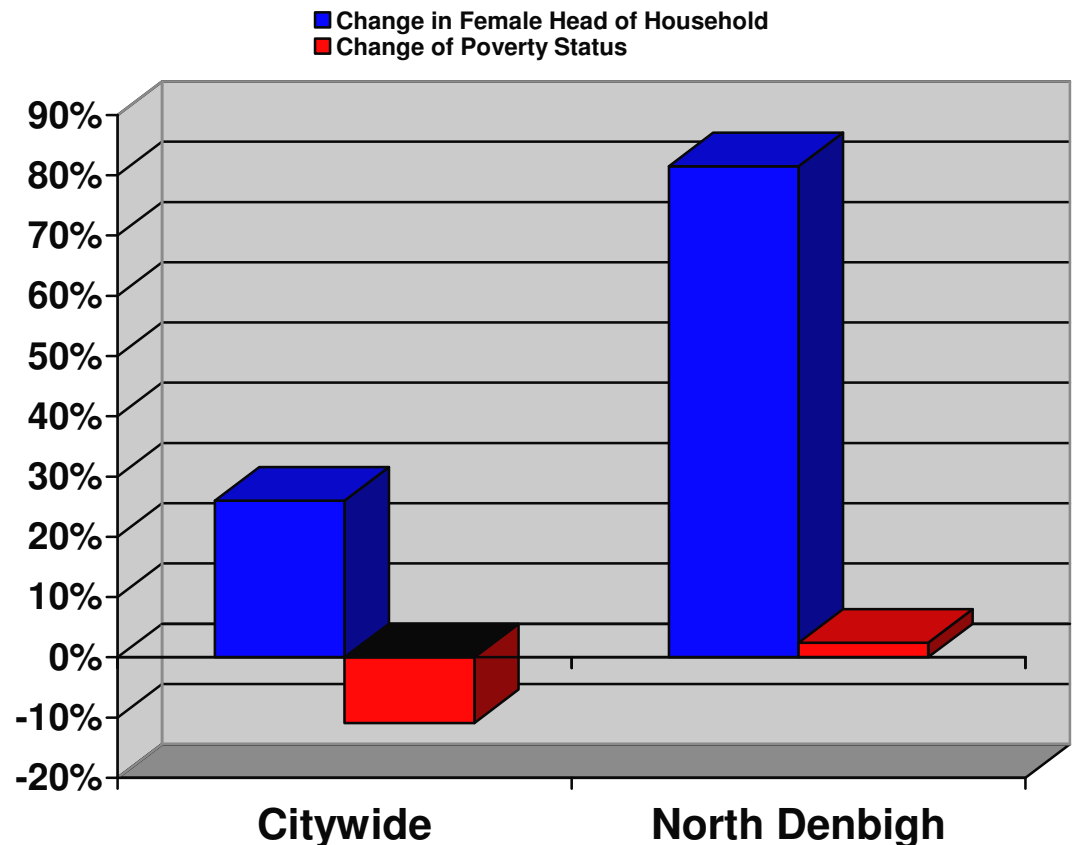


Table – Change in Demographics (1990 – 2000)

The North Denbigh neighborhood went from having a lower incidence of female-headed households than the City in 1990 (12.2% versus 15.1%) to a higher incidence (18.7% versus 17.5%) in 2000. Even more dramatic, the percentage of female-headed households living in poverty rose 2.4% in the North Denbigh neighborhoods, while declining 10.9%, citywide.

Business Closures

The Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor has suffered from increased vacancies and store closures, with these vacancies most often filled by commercial uses of a less desirable nature. This has led to an increase in the number of pawn shops, check-cashing stores and “one price” stores in the corridor and a corresponding decrease in the variety of higher quality retail shopping and services available to the surrounding population. Additionally, because of the low rents that are a result of decreases in property values, religious institutions (churches) now have increased to a disproportionate amount of the taxable retail properties. Churches now occupy many commercial areas utilizing the existing declined economic environment as an opportunity to expand.

Former fast food restaurant



Commercial property for sale



Economic Impact

“During the past ten years, real estate assessments on existing retail commercial properties, citywide, have increased 50%. In contrast, assessments of properties along the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh have increased by only 20% during the same period.”

A revitalization of the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in the North Denbigh neighborhood of Newport News would have far-reaching and positive economic benefits for the City of Newport News and its citizens. Benefits would particularly extend to service personnel stationed at the U.S. Army Transportation Center at Fort Eustis, many of whom live either on base or in nearby subdivisions in North Denbigh. The benefits of a revitalized Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor include both measurable and non-measurable effects.

One measurable effect is a projected increase in real estate property tax revenue to the City. Due to the disinvestment that has been occurring in the corridor, increases in property values have not kept up with those experienced elsewhere in the City. During the past ten years, real estate assessments on existing retail commercial properties, citywide, have increased 50%. In contrast, assessments of properties along the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh have increased by only 20% during the same time period. If the revitalization activities conducted by the City were to stimulate property owners to invest in property upkeep and were to stimulate increased rents and business revenue so that real estate assessments keep pace with the Citywide average, the City would experience a significant increase in real estate property tax revenues over a ten-year period. The present value of this tax revenue stream is estimated at \$720,000. Furthermore, the City of Newport News has traditionally had one of the highest fiscal stress levels in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as measured by the State’s Budget Office. The most recent report from the Virginia Commission on Local Government ranks Newport News as the ninth most fiscally stressed jurisdictions in Virginia out of 135 communities. This fiscal stress index measures the capacity of the local tax base, the demands on that tax base, and the community’s efforts to raise local revenue. Due, in part, to more than 20 percent of Newport News’ land area being owned by non-tax paying entities (including the federal government), the City is near the limit of its revenue raising capacity and this inhibits its ability to fund needed capital improvement and revitalization projects. Revitalization efforts *could* reduce the City’s stress level.

Improvements to Private Property

To the extent that public improvements along the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh are successful in leveraging improvements by property owners, shoppers should be more likely to patronize stores in the area. While this effect is not anticipated to be large, even a small increase in patronage can increase tax revenues to the City from business license fees and sales taxes. An increase of at least 5% in retail and service sales within the North Denbigh commercial corridor is projected to occur due to the City's revitalization efforts. This would result in a gain by the City of more than \$36,500, annually, in new tax revenues. Furthermore, if businesses upgrade store fixtures in response, additional tax revenue would be gained through increased business personal property tax collections. With a 5% increase in business personal property assessments within the corridor, the City would gain almost another \$4,000, annually, in new tax revenue. Increased sales within the commercial corridor would produce an increase in jobs as well. If the City's revitalization efforts were to reduce the current 12.6% shopping center vacancy rate to 5%, an estimated 80 new jobs

would be created. Increased sales activity within the commercial corridor could result in another 20 new jobs being created. This would create flexible employment opportunities for corridor area residents, augmenting the incomes and improving their quality of life.



Well landscaped fast food restaurant in Denbigh

Crime



Type of Crime	Economic Cost Savings
Burglary	\$54,680
Motor Vehicle Theft	\$165,380
Total	\$220,060

Source: FBI, *Crime in the U.S., 2000*, as reported by the National Center for Criminal Victimization.
Economic Costs of Sexual Assault, as reported by the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

A clear benefit would accrue to the citizens of the area if crime rates declined due to a combination of increased police focus and a general upgrade of the appearance and retail mix along the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh. The latter could inhibit crime by discouraging loitering and opportunistic crime associated with a deteriorating physical environment.

Between 1995 and 2002, the crime rate within the study area for those crimes increased by 14.1%, while the citywide incidence of these crimes rose by only 10.9%.

The incidence of burglary and motor vehicle theft was substantially higher within the North Denbigh commercial corridor than in other commercial areas throughout the City. This computes to 37.4 more burglaries and 24.75 more motor vehicle thefts than expected annually.

Bringing the incidence of these crimes to a level comparable with the average for other commercial districts would result in more than a \$220,000 annual savings in the cost of crime. The City does expect there to be targeted increases in the capital budget for police services and code enforcement as these funding initiatives are balanced or leveraged with other monetary opportunities. The table to the left indicates estimates as described above, which are based upon FBI reporting and other sources.

“The incidence of burglary and motor vehicle theft was substantially higher within the North Denbigh commercial corridor than in other commercial areas throughout the City.”

Revitalization

“The visual appearance, safety, and commercial improvement of the Warwick Boulevard corridor in Denbigh are essential if the trend toward neighborhood deterioration is to be stemmed and reversed.”



MCI call center (big box adaptive reuse)

A likely result of the revitalization of the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh will be an increased variety and improved quality of retail and commercial services available. During the past five years, the corridor has seen anchor tenants leave established shopping centers, retail establishments supplanted by churches, and an increase in pawnshops and check-cashing businesses along the corridor. There has also been an increase in discount clothing and “dollar” stores in shopping centers within the district. These occurrences are symptomatic of a retail district in decline. Reversing this trend would allow neighborhood residents and military personnel and families to enjoy greater shopping choices closer to home.

Finally, difficult to quantify, but a very real phenomenon, is the effect that a deteriorating corridor has on the neighborhoods that it serves.

Revitalization (continued)

Currently, the neighborhoods in North Denbigh represent a diverse mix of incomes. North Denbigh contains significant numbers of Section 8 housing units, placed there in accordance with federal housing policy of the past three decades. These neighborhoods are still predominantly middle and upper-middle income in character. However, more affluent homeowners, perceiving a deteriorated commercial district as having a negative effect on residential property values, are increasingly likely to abandon these neighborhoods for other, more attractive, communities.

The resulting flight actually does lower property values. As lower income households supplant the more affluent households that have left the neighborhood, the present mixed-income character of the North Denbigh neighborhoods will disappear.

This, in turn, will further reduce the consumer base upon which neighborhood shopping centers rely, resulting in further deterioration of the commercial district. The visual appearance, safety, and commercial improvement of the Warwick Boulevard commercial corridor in North Denbigh are essential if the trend toward neighborhood deterioration is to be stemmed and reversed.

If the negative cycle outlined above continues and worsens, this will have a seriously negative fiscal impact on the entire City, as tax revenues decline relative to service demands. Recent research has shown that fiscally unhealthy central cities negatively impact the entire surrounding metropolitan area. Therefore, this is a problem of regional magnitude.

Zoning

Listed below are the seven represented zoning classifications within the study area:

- C1 – Retail Commercial
- C2 – General Commercial
- O1 – Office
- P1 – Park
- R3 – Single Family
- R6 – Manufactured Home
- R7 - Med Density Multi-Family
- R8 – High Density Multi-Family

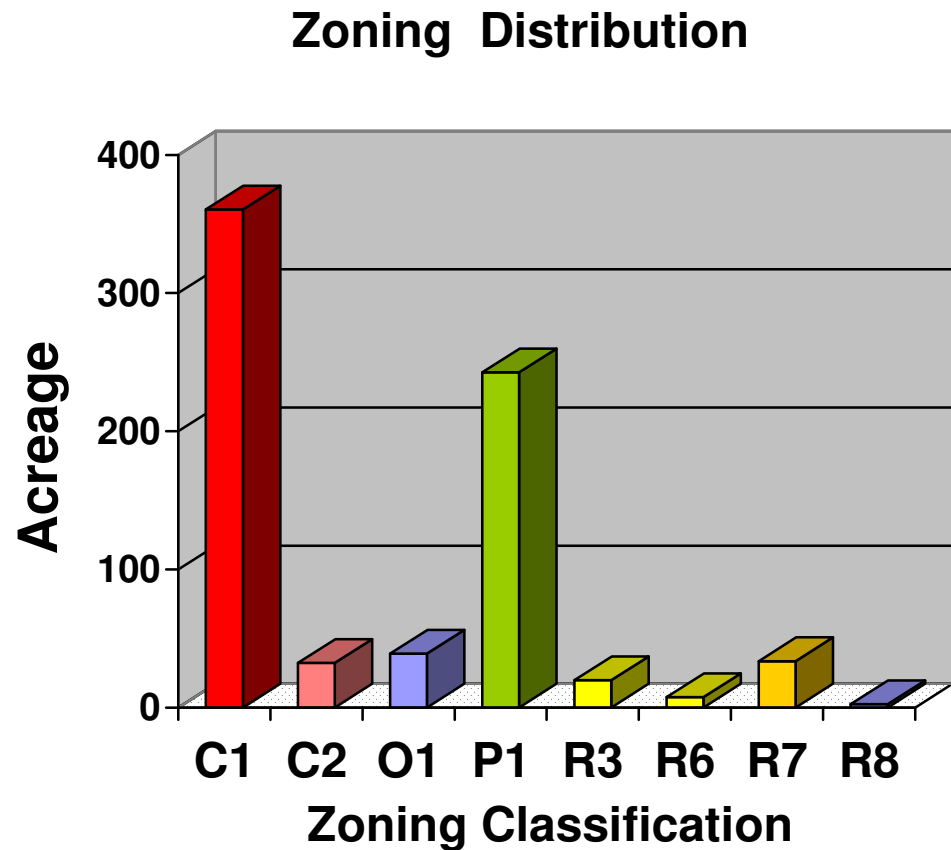
The majority of the parcels fronting the Warwick Boulevard corridor are zoned for commercial uses (See graph on next page). In fact, approximately 360 acres are classified as C1 (Retail Commercial). The second major zoning category is P1 (Park). Almost 243 acres along the corridor are zoned for Park uses (Stoney Run). The bulk of this zoning category is public property, in particular Mary Passage Middle School, Stoney Run Park, and Newport News watershed property.

Pyramid Zoning

Development patterns are heavily influenced by the zoning that guides development. In 1997, the City underwent a Comprehensive Rezoning to implement the *Framework for the Future*. However, prior to 1997, "Pyramid" zoning dominated the development in the City that resulted in today's eclectic mixture of land uses. Under Pyramid zoning, lesser intense uses generally were permitted in all categories. In other words, if a property was classified as general commercial, all uses considered "less intense," such as residential, office, community uses, etc., were permitted as a matter of right. An example of this past zoning practice is seen in several locations in the study area where single-family homes immediately abut commercial activities. Both uses were legally permitted by right under the theories employed at the time under Pyramid zoning.

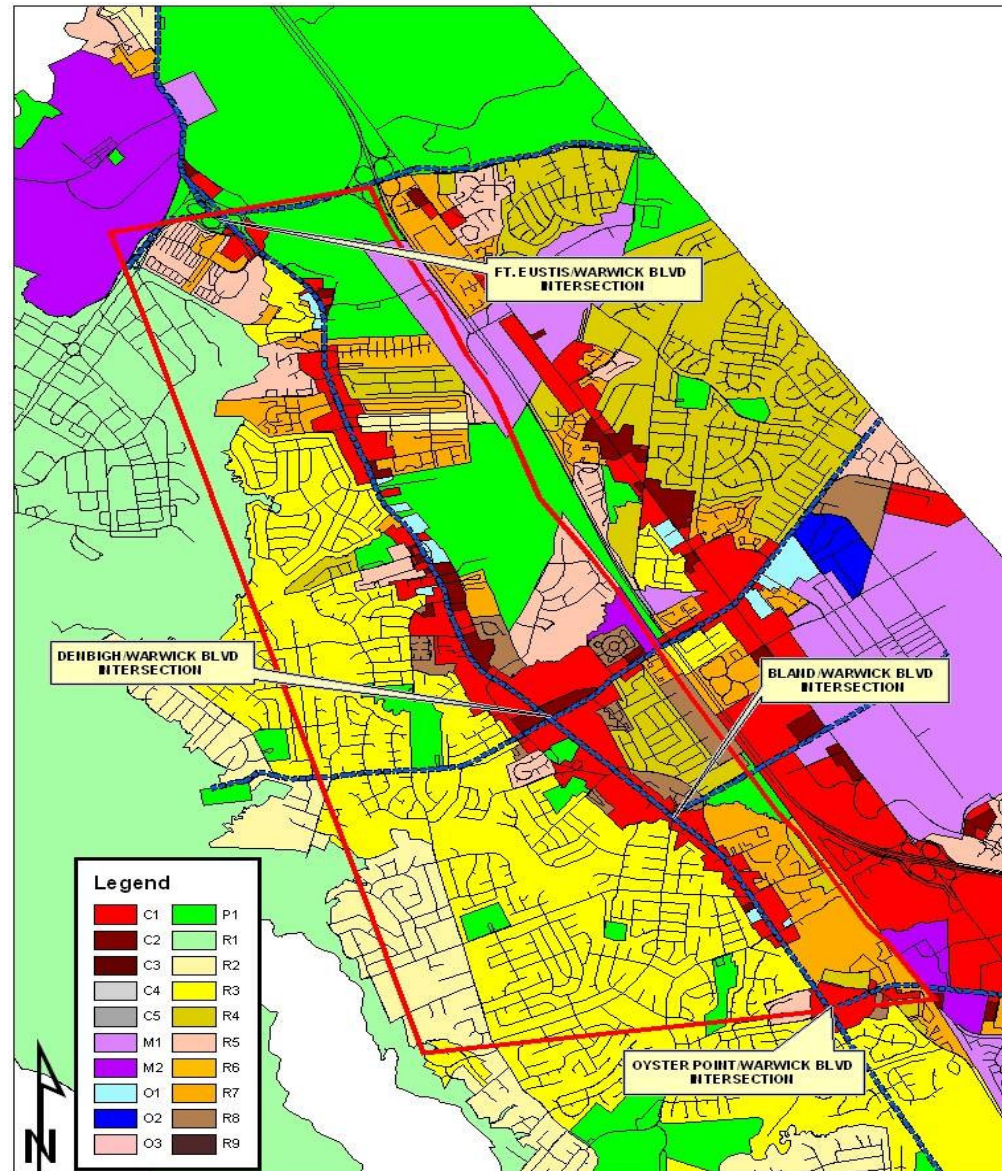
Unfortunately, this resulted in the unbalanced mixture of uses and created many land use conflicts.

As indicated in the zoning distribution chart to the right, very little of the property along the corridor is classified as residential. Although historically a retail area, the zoning along the corridor is disproportionably represented by commercial zoning. Consequently, the corridor lacks a balance of zoning categories that if available, would provide mix-type uses and opportunities for compatible or transition uses. (See zoning map on following page).



Zoning Distribution Chart

As noted on the Study Area Zoning Map to the right, the largest zoning category in the *study area* is single family residential. However, there are several multi-family developments in several commercial zoning categories that were permitted under the previous pyramid zoning scheme.



Study Area Zoning Map

The aerial map to the right indicates how Pyramid Zoning shaped the corridor through 1997 when a comprehensive zoning was approved by City council. The result of this zoning scheme was a mix of unrelated land uses with no transition between them. This past zoning practice created many land use conflicts: All uses were mixed together, for example, residential uses, single family detached, single family attached, and multi-family residential. And, all residential uses were intermixed with various types of commercial uses like retail and general commercial.

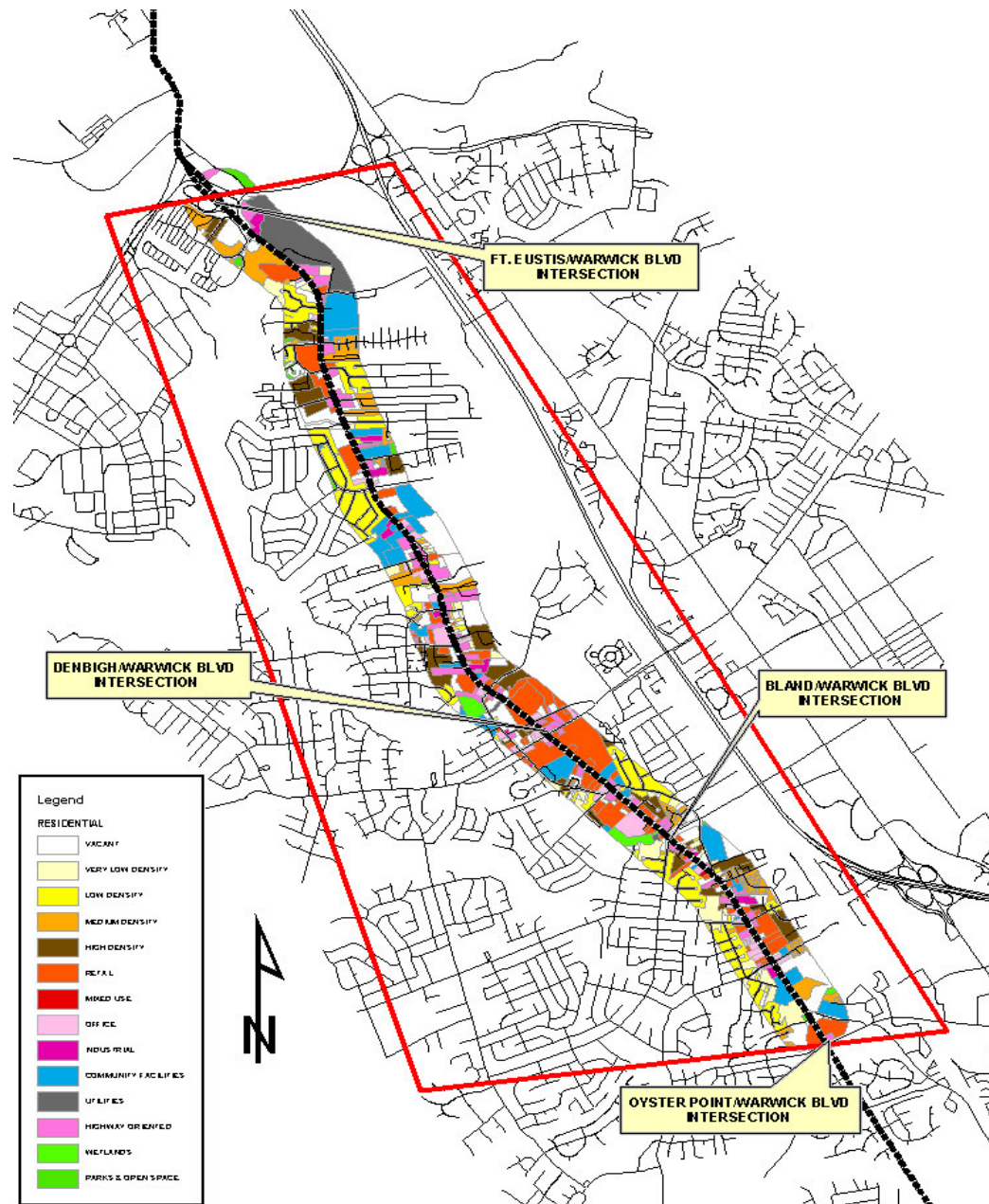
*Study Area Aerial Map
(Campbell Road and Warwick
Boulevard)*



LAND USE

Land Use Statistics (Acres)	
	Acres
Vacant	*130.9
Very Low Density	13.9
Low Density	0.0
Medium Density	41.1
High Density	5.3
Retail	147.9
Mixed Use	1.28
Office	52.1
Industrial	19.7
Community Facilities	93.9
Utilities	.71
Highway Oriented	86.4
Wetlands	14.6
Parks & Open Space	*406.1
Total Acreage	1,014

*Includes undeveloped watershed property, green areas, and future parks.



Corridor Land Use Map

Land Use Description

“The Study Area consists of approximately 1,014 acres of land stretching along more than 5.8 miles of primary roadway between Menchville Road and Fort Eustis Boulevard.”

The Warwick Boulevard Corridor Study Area (parcels abutting Warwick Boulevard) consists of approximately 1,014 acres of land extending along more than 5.8 miles of primary roadway between Menchville Road and Fort Eustis Boulevard. Existing land use reflects a similar pattern to current zoning; retail commercial uses dominate the corridor. These uses vary from retail to auto sales and repair. Because several different types of uses were permitted at the time the study area was developed, the commercial mix varies greatly. However, today's land use indicates a mix of retail, automotive related uses, convenience, and small commercial strip malls.

As illustrated on the existing land use map (see previous page) and the land use statistics, the primary land use is Parks and Open Space. However, this statistic is misleading because the data for this land use category reflects one large park, Stoney Run, which is not visible from the right-of-way and large portions of the City of Newport News' watershed property. Similar to other commercial corridors, the majority of the parcels, 71 out of the 327 or 22%, are used for Retail Commercial uses. Also high on the land use scale is Community Facilities, which includes churches, schools, libraries, and other public and community uses. Several parcels (51) are classified as Office uses. Many commercial type activities such as real estate and medical care are classified as Office. Other major land uses include Highway Oriented and Medium Density Residential. The Medium Density represents the various apartment complexes along the corridor.

Variety

Development of the Warwick Boulevard corridor, having taken place over several decades, has resulted in a mix of land uses including residential, commercial, office, park and open space. Past land use plans have designated the corridor for commercial uses with little regard for compatibility with existing uses, especially neighboring residential communities. Until the 1990s, transitional buffers between competing land uses have not been required, resulting in conflict between the various land uses. Today, land use conflicts are ameliorated through regulations governed by the Zoning Ordinance. Transitional buffers, special setbacks, and other land use controls have helped to buffer competing land uses.

Land Availability

Approximately ninety percent (90%) of the land in the study area is currently developed. However, there are many redevelopment opportunities that are found primarily in the northern portion of the study area (north of Denbigh Boulevard). Private investment and public reinvestment will affect development patterns thereby stimulating positive change and growth. Several planning and development initiatives undertaken by the City have started to have a positive impact on the corridor's vitality. These initiatives are further described later in the On-going Initiatives section of the study.

Housing

The residential communities in the study area mostly consist of an aging housing stock. The larger of the residential communities, e.g., Merry Oaks, Stoneybrook Estates, Beechmont, Beechwood Estates, Eastwood, Nicewood, and various subdivisions in the Menchville area were primarily developed in the 1950's. Ranch-style and transitional construction dominates the housing styles in these neighborhoods. Because of an aging housing stock, some property values have steadily declined (see Market Analysis).

Compatibility

Increases in traffic volumes, shifts in retail markets, and an aging corridor have impacted the quality of life for those properties that immediately abut Warwick Boulevard. Competing land uses and the shifting retail market (major land use) have decreased private investment.

Residential Development

Residential development accounts for approximately sixty acres or six percent (6%) of the total acreage in the Study area. Single family housing, built mostly since the 1950's and 1960s, is located in subdivisions secluded from Warwick Boulevard. There is a large range and supply of multi-family housing within short distance of the corridor. A variety of apartments, condominiums, manufactured homes, and townhouses, proliferate the fringes of the study area. Many of these multi-family dwellings are beginning to age as well, although they were constructed 10 to 20 years after the single family detached houses and planned residential communities. It is worth noting that there has been some new housing construction, but most of it has been in the form of infill projects.

TRANSPORTATION

Warwick Boulevard functions as a major east/west arterial, and plays a critical role in carrying traffic through Newport News. Redevelopment and access control in the corridor should focus on the traffic carrying capability of the road. Currently, most of the corridor's segments are rated as a D or F level of service (LOS) during peak travel times (LOS levels range from Good=A to F=poor). In fact, there are some segments that are rated as D or below during "off peak" travel times. The following information describes transportation on the Warwick Boulevard corridor extending from Oyster Point Road to Fort Eustis Boulevard.

Importance

Traffic Volumes



Intersection of Tabbs Lane and Warwick Boulevard early afternoon traffic

Warwick Boulevard is a *Major Arterial* with an average right-of-way width of approximately 110 feet. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) classifies Warwick Boulevard as a Principal Arterial highway.

Traffic data provided by VDOT indicates that this segment of Warwick Boulevard averages approximately 50,000 vehicles per day. Congestion occurs primarily during the morning and afternoon peak hours at signalized intersections and throughout the travel ways of the corridor. Traffic has exceeded the total carrying capacity (45,000 vehicle trips per day) of the existing roadway.

Widening Improvements

Warwick Boulevard is not scheduled for widening in the future due to lack of funding. In the 2026 HR Regional Transportation plan, Warwick Boulevard is not scheduled for widening from four to six lanes between Oyster Point Road and Fort Eustis Boulevard.

Signalized Intersections

Currently, there are 24 signalized intersections along the 5.8 mile portion of Warwick Boulevard. These signals are located approximately every ¼ mile of the roadway. Traffic signals are interconnected and used to funnel traffic east and west through the corridor. The signals channel traffic from residential areas utilizing a traffic responsive system based on vehicular demand.

Access Management

Many cross streets funnel traffic throughout the area, with some priority access to Interstate 64. Major cross streets include Fort Eustis Boulevard, Denbigh Boulevard, Bland Boulevard, and Oyster Point Boulevard. In addition to each cross street, many parcels along the corridor have at least one entrance/exit. Too many access points along the roadway can create challenges for transportation engineers and their excess numbers can impede traffic management techniques. Further discussion on this matter can be found in the Problems/Issues section of the study.

Other Projects

Other roadway projects within the corridor include a planned east-west connector (Atkinson Way) from Stoneybrook Estates to Fort Eustis Boulevard and a second access road to Fort Eustis near Ashton Green Boulevard which is currently under construction with a planned completion date of June, 2005.

Pedestrian Travel

The current disrepair of sidewalks and pedestrian support facilities along areas in the corridor and other factors has discouraged pedestrian travel. Although varying conditions and styles of sidewalks exist in the corridor, pedestrian, bicycle, and handicap travel are low because of inadequate pedestrian oriented walkways and facilities, and the lack of much needed improvements to the right-of-way. Facilitating pedestrian access is critical to the vitality of the corridor and to make the area a more livable community.

PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY

The public rights-of-way account for a large portion of the study's focus. Major arterials typically require a large right-of-way to incorporate, for example, the roadway, medians, sidewalks, utilities, landscaping, and public areas. These areas constitute the public realm.

These right-of-way components are an important element to the vitality of the corridor and its surrounding land uses. In the study, several references are made to improving the public right-of-way and resultantly improving the aesthetics of the corridor area and achieving the goal of the study.



The public Right-of-Way near Ft. Eustis Boulevard

Natural Environment

Several tributaries to the James River traverse the corridor intersecting with Warwick Boulevard including Lucas Creek near Eastwood Drive, Stoney Run Creek near Old Courthouse Way, and the Warwick River near Fort Eustis. Water quality in these tributaries is of serious concern because of commercial stormwater runoff, delinquent property owners, and intense development.

Recognizing the need for increasing protection and improvements to the area's tributaries, the City has completed the *Stoney Run Water Quality Improvement Greenway Corridor Plan*. When implemented, the Plan's measures will decrease the negative effects of commercial and residential stormwater runoff and improve the overall water quality of Stoney Run Creek and ultimately the James River and Chesapeake Bay.

City regulation of activities within floodplains and Resource Protection and Resource Management Areas provides protection for water supplies and wildlife. Also within the

Study area is Newport News Waterworks' watershed property that protects the Lee Hall Reservoir and the region's water supply. The property is protected and managed by the City's Waterworks department and regulations within City Ordinances.



Stoney Run Creek at Warwick Boulevard

ON-GOING INITIATIVES

In the past few years, the City has initiated several measures to address the corridor's changing economic and physical appearance. In its resolve to improve the corridor, City leaders have focused their efforts on the segment under study. Similar to other aging corridors in the Country, many areas are in need of improvement and the solutions are complex. Although some improvements can be implemented with future capital improvement budgeting, others require a substantial commitment of public resources. However, several initiatives have been put into action to improve the corridor. The following is a brief synopsis of that on-going effort:

Private Loan Program

- The Department of Development has provided loans for business improvements and expansions. Most of these loans have involved smaller retail and several have been used to expand/upgrade existing businesses thereby improving the corridor's aesthetics.

Public Improvements

- There has been large-scale construction of much-needed public facilities. For example, the City has built a new middle school (Mary Passage) and a new Lee Hall water treatment facility. There have been improvements to water and sewer service delivery, road repair, upgrading traffic signalization, and other infrastructure improvements. In addition, the City has continued the development of Stoney Run Park, including the conceptual design of a community/recreation center.

Police

- The City is researching options to locate a satellite Codes Compliance office within the Study area. The satellite office would also provide space to the Police Department to help implement patrols and accessibility to the community.

Grants/Funding

- An Economic Development Grant Initiative (EDI) has been submitted for Congressional support of the revitalization of the corridor.

Location of Codes Compliance Office

- The City of Newport News Codes Compliance satellite office will be relocated from its current location at Williamsburg/Newport News Airport to a location on the corridor. It is anticipated that this location will elevate the level of code enforcement in this area of the city.

Economic Development

- The City of Newport News Department of Economic Development has focused on attracting and retaining commercial activity utilizing the City's Small Business Visitation Program. In addition, some properties are eligible for a Real Estate Tax Abatement program for Commercial Structures.

Green Foundation

The Green Foundation has purchased property within the study area as part of its mission to preserve and enhance green areas throughout the City. The properties have benefited the community by securing property that could otherwise be developed. Some properties that the Foundation purchases are maintained as green space while others are held for future redevelopment. For example, a large 3.7-acre wooded lot adjacent to Stoneybrook Shopping Center was purchased by the foundation.



Recently acquired Green Foundation Property near Stoney Brook Shopping Center

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and recommendations of this study are based on an analysis by City staff, input received during the Warwick Boulevard Corridor Study survey, and suggestions from citizens during the public hearings. The recommendations are intended as a guide for future corridor improvements, as a base of consideration when developing City policies and the ultimate implementation of public improvements recommended herein. The planning team measured the issues and opportunities as part of the study and the following emerged from that analysis:

General Recommendations

- Implement landscape/ and streetscape improvements. Establish a hierarchy of open space.
- Take advantage of the R9 (Mixed-Use) zoning category to rezone select properties to mixed-use. Concentrate mixed-use development at primary intersections.
- Establish a “Village Center” at Oriana Road and Warwick Boulevard.
- Modify the roadway cross-section to provide design improvements for medians, roadway, streetscape, and sidewalks. Define street improvement concepts.
- Consolidate commercial entrances and driveways to decrease curb cuts. Encourage shared parking
- Secure easements where necessary to provide additional width for transit, streetscape, and parking lot improvements.
- Infill commercial expanses with residential uses.
- Plan for redevelopment and corridor evolution in phases.

Civic Involvement

“City leaders are currently working with interested business owners to help create a “business association” along the corridor.”

There is no formal organization of area business owners in Denbigh. Lacking such a network, it is difficult for businesses to foster a teamwork approach to address the challenges existing on the corridor. . There is little incentive, and it may indeed be imprudent, to apply the resources necessary to upgrade a property if adjacent areas are left in a continuing state of decay. The actions of one proprietor on the corridor will have negligible positive impact if others sit idle or allow continued decline. Noting that the improvement of such a large area requires a team effort, few people foresee improvements based on individualistic efforts. This viewpoint was reinforced at a community meeting when a property owner stated a desire to improve commercial property but could foresee very little financial return on his effort due to the run-down appearance of adjacent properties

One suggestion for the potential improvement of the corridor is to create a business owners’ association similar to that in the Mercury Boulevard area of Hampton, Virginia. City of Newport News leaders are currently working with interested business owners to help create a “business association” along the corridor.

Physical Appearance

As already noted, aesthetics are an important element of any physical area, especially retail corridors. The physical appearance of a corridor for a resident, shopper, tourist, or traveler, can influence the perception of an area. Too few people realize the importance of “aesthetics” in the vitality of a community. Today, more than ever, community leaders and citizens are searching for ways to make their cities and towns more distinctive and more livable. Improving the quality of life in the community attracts economic development. Businesses put a high value on livability in making location decisions. Aesthetics relates directly to an impression of livability and economic vitality. Details, variety, and complexity provide the richness that makes things interesting for us. People are beginning to ask for a less chaotic, and more appealing public environment. There is a growing awareness that the quality of the physical setting is an important element in the quality of life.

The Right-of-Way as Public Space

The width of the public right-of-way within the study segment of Warwick Boulevard is approximately one hundred and ten feet (110'). The right-of-way is an area that includes the road itself and the narrow band of publicly owned property on either side of the road where sidewalks, curbing, and utility lines are typically located.

“Improving the quality of life in the community attracts economic development. Businesses put a high value on livability in making location decisions.”



The public right-of-way near the intersection of Colony Road and Warwick Boulevard

The Right-Of-Way as Public Space (cont.)

The City is responsible for many components within the right-of-way including, the roadway, median, landscaping, pedestrian facilities, e.g., sidewalks, bike lanes, bus stops, utilities, and public signage. Together, these corridor components can influence the visual and aesthetic view of the right-of-way, and should be considered a major element of the corridor. Collectively and singularly, these elements project an image of the vitality of the corridor. Therefore, the appearance and placement of each element should define a rational and structured purpose for the entire corridor. Because the public right-of-way is public domain, it is a representation of the City's image. In addition, private property is within view of the public right-of-way and can have influence.

Listed to the right are typical right-of-way improvements that may be utilized to upgrade a roadway corridor:

Right-of-way improvements are any type of public improvement made in a roadway's "right-of-way," which is the strip of land that includes the road itself and the narrow band of publicly owned property on either side of the road where sidewalks, curbing, and utility lines are typically located.

- Roadside landscaping & tree planting
- Median landscaping
- Inclusion of bike lanes
- Improvement or addition of sidewalks and pedestrian paths
- Street lighting
- Addition of benches, trash receptacles or similar street furniture
- Traffic calming features such as speed bumps, raised pedestrian crossings, or narrowed traffic lane widths
- New traffic signals
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) related improvements such as curb ramps

Corridor Characteristics

The principles listed to the right underline the basic essential characteristics of a corridor as described by Allan Jacobs in his book “Great Streets”.

The right-of-way represents the public realm. As a public space, corridors should be safe, comfortable, barrier-free, pleasing to the eye, used by many, and a source of civic pride. This is a place for social interaction of citizens. “If we can develop roads that are attractive public spaces, community-building places, then we will have successfully designed one third of the city and will have an immense effect on the rest.”⁴

To function as a public space, corridors should be:

Secure: Corridors should be safe and friendly areas for pedestrians and cyclists, and for adjacent residents and businesses.

Comfortable: Corridors should maximize the physical comfort of pedestrians and cyclists, and of adjacent residents and businesses, through mitigation of the environmental effects of temperature, sun, rain, snow, wind, lighting glare, visual, noise, and air pollution.

Convenient: Corridors should be convenient for their users by providing amenities, accessibility, signage, and integration with adjacent uses, as well as the ease of travel along the corridor.

Engaging to the Eye: Corridors should have qualities that engage the eye through the creative combination of road elements such as trees and vegetation, lighting, signs, furniture, public art, utility infrastructure, and the definition provided by adjacent landscaping and buildings.

Spatially Defined: Corridors should be redeveloped with regard for height and setback of adjacent buildings and landscaping to define human-scaled spaces.

Green: Corridors should maximize the amount of vegetation as an attractive element of public space, to green the urban landscape and to create public spaces and greenways.

Universally Accessible: Corridors can contribute to the diversity of communities by hosting land uses and public spaces where people of all levels of physical ability, from all walks of life and from other communities can meet and interact without barriers.

⁴ Allan B. Jacobs, Great Streets, MIT Press, 1995

No Sense of Place

A physical feature, prominent landmark, or common theme can identify most areas and tells the traveler they are in a particular place. The Warwick Corridor unfortunately lacks such key elements. A sense of place includes the notion of being “oriented.”

When traveling through the corridor, it is difficult to identify or describe a location, other than generic elements within the City’s right-of-way. A well designed corridor uses landscaping, physical features, and other heritage sites to distinguish location.



This public right-of-way area near Lee’s Mill and Ft. Eustis Boulevard represents the corridor’s lack of identity.

There is no theme or unified architectural style that distinguishes or represents the community. According to Dr. Jennifer Cross a sociologist with the Department of Sociology at Colorado State University, “a sense of place is actually composed of two quite different aspects. The first aspect, *relationship to place*, consists of the ways that people relate to places, or the types of bonds we have with places. The second aspect, *community attachment*, consists of the depth and types of attachments to one particular place.”⁵ Both of these descriptions indicate how people perceive their relationship to the area for which they live.

⁵ What is Sense of Place, Jennifer E. Cross, Colorado State University, 12th Headwaters Conference, Western State College, November 4th, 2001

Gateway to the City

Gateway entrance locations can represent the established bounds of a particular community. Gateways are generally located at major access points along the corridor. These areas include Warwick Boulevard's intersections with Oyster Point Road, Bland Boulevard, Denbigh and Ft. Eustis Boulevards, and the entrance into the City from Route 60 East near Elmhurst Drive in Lee Hall.

“The physical appearance of the area fronting the road is crucial in conveying the City’s image”

From its close proximity to Interstate 64 in the northern end to the James River Bridge and Interstate 664, Warwick Boulevard plays a vital role as both a major arterial corridor and as a gateway to the city. Most of the residents and businesses of Newport News utilize their direct access to the corridor on a daily basis. In the study area, local residents, employees, shoppers, and tourists, generate about 45,000 vehicle trips per day.

For tourists, the commercial corridor provides a first impression and sometimes the sole exposure to the City. Gateways are the primary entry points to the City. As such, efforts should be taken to enhance these focal points with landscaping, public art, distinctive signage, and other design features that will strongly delineate these approach routes to the city. The physical appearance of the area fronting the road is crucial in conveying the City's image. A gateway landscape and entrance plan is recommended near Ft. Eustis Boulevard's intersection with the corridor. Improving this area will have the added benefit of also improving the entranceway to the Army base at Ft. Eustis.



Potential gateway entrance point at Bland and Warwick Boulevards

Signage



Commercial signage

Signs are an important aspect of commercial activity and can influence the visual character of a road. Importantly, both private and public signage influences the character of a street. In addition to being an important economic tool, they also present an opportunity to create a lively corridor and active commercial environment. However, unregulated, excessive, and improperly placed signage can have a negative affect on the corridor's physical appearance. It can also negatively affect a retail business's ability to attract customers.

Commercial signage is an important element to any commercial corridor. Signs are necessary to identify businesses and provide information to patrons. Signs can be a critical component of the success or failure of a business. Unfortunately, signs are often used in an inappropriate manner, even haphazardly without any forethought of the impact to the corridor or its effectiveness on the consumer.

There is a mix of signage types and sizes within the corridor along with, in certain situations, an overabundance of signs on individual lots. This "visual clutter" is unnecessary. Combined with excessive and confusing public/roadway signage, excessive commercial signage can clutter the corridor and hinder the commercial environment.

After evaluating existing signage along the study area (both public and private), it was determined that signage clutter was one of the major limitations of the corridor.

Many signs proliferate the roadway with little regard to the order of the other components of the corridor. Below are the four major sign types:

- Identification sign/pole sign
- Wall/building signs
- Temporary signs
- Directional signs (entrance/exit)

Pole Signs



Sign at the intersection of Denbigh and Warwick Boulevards

Pole signs are permitted by right by the City's Zoning Ordinance and their height, size, shape, and style vary depending on the size of the commercial parcel, road frontage, zoning, and grandfathered status⁶. There simply are too many signs in the corridor. Their height and size have overwhelmed the physical appearance of the corridor. Some are illegal, obtrusive to the passerby, and unsafe for traffic. In addition, many of the existing signs are badly in need of maintenance and repair, e.g., painting, re-facing, and appropriate lighting. The corridor has many deteriorating signs, some no longer in use.

Most businesses including those leasing space in a strip shopping center, have wall signs. These signs are used for identification and are permitted by the Zoning Ordinance. The signs vary depending on building sizes and parcel frontage. It appears that poor maintenance and over overabundant sign are the main detractors from the corridor.

Signs are used to identify entrances to parcels. They also provide important directional information for drivers navigating large parcels and negotiating the circulation pattern on commercial property. Unfortunately, they can be used excessively and increase the sign clutter on a property. It was noted during the study that there are too many unnecessary directional signs. Many are in need of repair and maintenance.

⁶ Signs no longer permitted are still in use because of laws governing rights to a grandfathered status.

Temporary Signs



A major problem is the proliferation of temporary signs. Temporary signs are portable and are often located along the frontage of a parcel facing the right-of-way. The signs typically have messages on them and are wheeled out in front of a store. These signs are usually internally lit and are in various maintenance conditions. The signs distract a driver's attention and obscure views of entrances, parking areas, and detract from the appearance of the corridor.

Utility Markers and Public Signage



Many do not realize the number of signs within the public right-of-way. These signs vary greatly e.g., regulatory roadway signs, street and block number signs, utility markers, community uses, historical sites, etc. Although these signs are an important and necessary component of the corridor, they are ubiquitous and contribute to visual clutter. Many are placed haphazardly (attached to light poles, combined with other existing signage, etc.) without any thought to the appearance to the corridor.

Illegal Signs



Regrettably, there are many signs that exist along the corridor that are illegal according to the City's sign ordinance. Illegal signage was cited as one of the major problems that the City faces in its ability to enforce City codes. The illegal signs range from large window signs, real estate signs, to promotional signs. Combined with the existing legal signage, illegal signs add to the visual clutter.

A great majority of the signage clutter is perpetuated because the City's sign ordinance is outdated and not in line with progressive sign ordinances. In 2003, the Virginia General Assembly recently passed legislation to allow the removal of abandoned signage, such the example shown to the right. (Signs must be abandoned for a period of two calendar years.)



Sign Regulation

Regulation of on-premise advertising signs is one important means by which a community can assert control over its physical environment. Signs are an important aspect of commercial activity and can influence the visual character of a road. Besides being an important economic tool, they also present an opportunity to create a lively commercial environment. Signs can be used to direct, inform, and entice. Properly designed, signs can enhance the character of a community. However, if they are too large, bright, or numerous, they compete for the drivers' attention, with important traffic signs and safety messages becoming invisible in a field of clutter.

Recommendations for Signage

Signs are regulated as part of the City Code. The City's regulations govern the physical elements of the sign, e.g., size, area, height, etc. The regulations also govern the location, type of sign, and property line setbacks from the property lines. Because signs are a major component of the commercial corridor, its visual impact can enhance, or detract from the corridor's appearance.



This new sign is located on Jefferson Avenue east of Denbigh Boulevard outside of the study area.

After reviewing the study area's existing signage, it was determined that several changes were needed in the City's sign ordinance. In the interest of traffic safety, development, and concern for the appearance of the community, the City should consider revisions to the City's sign



New ground mounted monument style sign at the intersection of Beechmont and Warwick Boulevards.

ordinance. Although sign standards can only minimally regulate content, they can specify design, and limit size, location, and the number of words per sign.

Below are recommendations for signage along the corridor:

- Design monument and wall-mounted signs to be in scale with the adjacent buildings and land uses in terms of height, width and surface area, and to avoid a cluttered streetscape. Prescribe maximum signage area, or regulate sign area as a percentage of the wall to which it is attached. Consider 15 feet as a maximum height for pole signs.
- Use shared-use or joint signs to reduce sign clutter.
- Integrate landscape features surrounding the base of ground mounted signs.
- The use of temporary or portable signs should be eliminated to minimize the amount of sign clutter near the right-of-way, to keep sight lines clear and to prevent encroachment into the right-of way.
- Provide appropriate setbacks from the travel way for ground mounted signs so they do not obscure the view of pedestrians, cyclists, or motorists at intersections, driveways, or along sidewalks, and prohibit signs within corner sight triangles.
- Prohibit signs with flashing, animated, pulsating, rotating, or otherwise moving components, so that road users are not distracted.

If these sign recommendations are followed, the end result will be a more visually attractive environment, one in which businesses can communicate more effectively to their customers.

On-site signs, such as ground mounted monument signs should be designed with consistent design elements, such as a base material, height, and lettering style, to create a visual continuity and quality to development.

- Consider prohibiting the erection of large reader board signs.
- All new or replacement freestanding signs should be monument signs that shall not exceed 10 feet in height. Such signs shall be consistent with the architectural character of the site and building, incorporating at least one of the primary materials, colors, or design elements of the associated structure(s).
- On-site signs, such as monument signs should be designed with consistent design elements, such as a base material, height, and lettering style, to create a visual continuity and quality to development. All above grade foundations should be screened by landscape treatments.
- The current sign regulations in the City Code should be studied in detail. An effort should be made to diminish the number of nonconforming signs over time.

Utilities

“An overabundance of utility poles and overhead power or telecommunication lines significantly compromises the visual quality of the roadway.”

Electrical and utility poles and wires are the primary source of visual clutter in the corridor. Similar to other commercial corridors, power lines, light poles, and other utility infrastructure were placed above ground. Telephone poles with overhead lines stretching parallel and across the public right-of-way are highly visible. An overabundance of utility poles and overhead power or telecommunication lines significantly compromises the visual quality of the roadway and surrounding landscape, especially in commercial areas and entrances to major neighborhoods and communities. The worst conditions occur where poles are closely spaced at the edge of paving with multiple lines spanning across roads or road intersections, directly in the line of sight.

As indicated in the top photo, overhead utility lines add visual clutter and detract from the appearance of the corridor.



Overhead utility lines near Campbell Road and Warwick Boulevard

There are a few areas (as shown to the right) where overhead utility lines are not visible and these areas clearly contrast with areas where overhead utilities are abundant. Placing utilities underground is expensive but worthwhile if undertaken in selected areas where doing so would greatly enhance community image and views of natural features.



Warwick Boulevard in front of Denbigh Village Center

The photo to the right was taken at the intersection of Beechmont Drive and Warwick Boulevard. The lower photo has been enhanced to show the same area without overhead utilities or poles. This improvement greatly simplifies sight lines and improves safety for both drivers and pedestrians.



Before - Intersection of Beechmont Drive and Warwick Boulevard



After - Intersection of Beechmont Drive and Warwick Boulevard

The photos to the right show another example of what the corridor could look like with the removal of overhead utility lines and the removal of abandoned signage. The site is located on the eastbound lane of Warwick Boulevard near the Beechmont Shopping Center.



Before



After

Utility Boxes

Most utility boxes are located within the City right-of-way with only a few located on private property. Utility boxes include, traffic signals, cable TV, power, etc. When possible, they should be strategically located in such a manner to reduce their visibility. These utilities should be screened from the right-of-way, but still accessible for maintenance. In most instances, shrubs and other landscape plant material can effectively screen utility boxes. In other cases, they can be located behind structures to reduce their visibility. Since these utilities are an integral part of all roadways, they cannot be eliminated. In some cases, they can be relocated to areas where they are less visible.

Graffiti on utility boxes is a major problem within the corridor along with the on-going maintenance costs associated with its removal. With appropriate landscaping, the allure for defacing private property will be diminished or completely disappear.



An effectively screened utility box on Oyster Point Road... Landscaping screens utility boxes from the right-of-way and reduces or eliminates the opportunity for graffiti.

Light Poles



A double row of utility and light poles

Light poles are a necessary component of corridors, especially those with commercial retail uses and pedestrian facilities. The study area has street lighting that is evenly spaced along the segment of roadway. Unfortunately, in some places the light poles are adjacent to the utility poles making two unsightly rows of overhead utilities.

The prevalent lighting within the study area consists of light poles 30' in height along the roadway. These light poles, although evenly spaced throughout the segment, are not "full-cutoff" light fixtures recommended by the Illumination Engineering Society of North America (IESNA). Full cutoff lighting does not create spillover onto adjacent properties or create unwanted glare. These lights prevent unwanted glare and save money. Since their light projection is directed completely downward (no lighting is projected beyond the horizontal plane), lights are more efficient and in some cases, fewer lights are needed. Light pollution, created by excess glare and spillover, wastes energy⁷, infringes on other people's property rights creating nuisances, adversely affects the environment, clutters the urban sky glow, and, because of misdirected light and glare, actually *reduces* safety in and around the lighted area⁸.

⁷ According to the National Academy of Sciences, the light that obscures our view of the night sky comes mainly from inefficient light sources that do little to increase nighttime safety, utility or security. The unfocused light produces glare and clutter and is costing more than \$1 billion annually in wasted energy. According to the EPA, lighting accounts for 20-25% of the electricity used in the United States. 80-90% of this is used for industry, stores, offices, and warehouses. 20-30% of this is lost light that blocks our view of the sky, but does nothing to increase safety. If energy-efficient lighting were used everywhere profitable, EPA projections show:

- a 50% reduction in electricity demanded
- reduced carbon dioxide emissions of 232 tons (or 42 million cars)
- reduced sulfur dioxide emissions by 1.7 million tons
- reduced nitrogen oxide emissions by 1 million tons

⁸ International Dark-Sky Association, Tuscon, AZ: "Light Pollution: The Problem, The Solutions" No. 134 February, 1998

Below is an example of a bad lighting fixture. This style is currently in use on the corridor. Also shown is what has been designated as a good fixture, the flat-lens cobra head.

BAD

The ubiquitous drop-lens cobra head luminaire



GOOD

Flat-lens cobra head luminaire



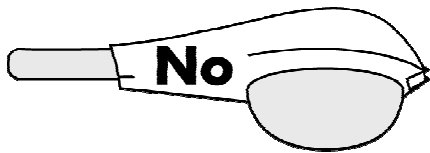
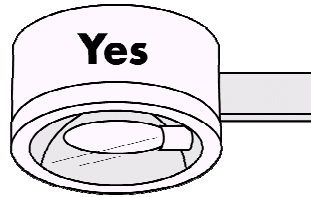
According to the Dark Sky Association, which is a national professional lighting organization, the following are impacts associated with improper lighting:

- Unshielded light shining into eyes reduces vision and is dangerous. A good light fixture shows you the scene, but can't be seen.
- Misdirected light shining into eyes, off property, or into the night sky is wasted electricity. That means higher electric bills and unnecessary air pollution.
- Misdirected light shining onto adjacent property is a nuisance. Too much light can create clutter, the visual equivalent of dueling stereos, and gives the community an industrial look.
- Excessively bright lighting creates difficulty seeing into nearby darker areas. A highly illuminated background makes foreground objects turn into silhouettes. Eyes readjust slowly from bright light to lower light levels, temporarily diminishing vision.
- An overly lighted business can be as intrusive as an oversized sign and creates a prison yard look.

Traffic and pedestrian safety is another advantage of using full-cutoff lighting. Proper street lighting actually improves vehicular, as well as pedestrian safety. Using full-cutoff lighting, light is directed where it is wanted with no spillover.

The number of streetlights should be kept to a minimum required for road safety purposes. Consult the latest IESNA standards.

Flat-lens eliminates or minimizes glare, no upward throw of light.



Consistent with the above statements, it is the recommendation of this study that all lighting within the right-of-way of the corridor be replaced with "full-cutoff" lighting fixtures or "flat-lens cobra head" fixtures. Where appropriate, "semi-cutoff" pedestrian scale lighting should be utilized to increase safety. In some cases, semi-cutoff lighting with a "Type III" light distribution pattern would be more appropriate.

Pedestrian scale lighting, where appropriate, should be considered as supplemental lighting where street lighting is not functional for nighttime sidewalk use. Pedestrian scale lighting, similar to landscaping, can help to define the right-of-way.



These pictures show the current light fixtures in use in the study area



Utility Markers

Various utility markers, such as gas, sewer, water, fiber optic, etc, are ubiquitous along the corridor. These markers are typically not screened from the right-of-way and add to the visual clutter. In some cases, markers are easily damaged because of their exposure to heavy vehicular traffic and vulnerable to vandalism. These markers should be grouped and incorporated into landscaped areas to minimize their visual impact.

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

It is important to facilitate pedestrian access throughout a commercial corridor in a safe and efficient manner. In addition to accessing commercial and community uses, pedestrians use the corridor to access bus transit, exercise, and simply enjoy the outdoors. Encouraging pedestrian access is important to the economic vitality of the corridor and subsequently reduces traffic demands.

Sidewalks



The 5.8 mile study area contains existing sidewalks of varying width, condition, and location. Some sidewalks immediately abut the curb/roadway while other locations have a grass strip between the roadway and the edge of sidewalk. The sidewalks also vary in width from a minimum of 3 feet to a width of 8 feet.

The sidewalk corridor is the portion of the pedestrian system from the edge of the roadway to the edge of the right-of-way, generally along the sides of streets, between street corners. The sidewalk corridor's intended function is to provide an environment for walking that is separated from vehicle movement.

The majority of the sidewalks are in poor condition. Many have cracks, broken concrete, are in need of edging, and lack general upkeep. Poor sidewalk maintenance discourages pedestrian traffic and can endanger their safety. Sidewalks are not well defined and pedestrians have to negotiate various obstacles, including different widths and treatments. Handicap accessibility appeared to be acceptable. Although the corridor provides pedestrian access, the corridor lacks a uniform and consistent sidewalk treatment throughout.

The following are general principles for sidewalks along the corridor:

Quality of Place: Sidewalk corridors should contribute to the character of neighborhoods and business districts, and strengthen their identity.

Safety: Sidewalk corridors should allow pedestrians to feel a sense of safety and predictability. Sidewalk users should not feel threatened by adjacent traffic.

Continuity: The walking route along a sidewalk corridor should be obvious and should not require pedestrians to travel out of their way unnecessarily.

Landscaping Plantings: Landscape plantings and street trees in the sidewalk corridor should create desirable microclimates and should contribute to the psychological and visual comfort of sidewalk users.

Social Space: Sidewalk corridors should provide places for people to interact. There should be places for standing, visiting, and sitting. The sidewalk corridor should be a place where children can safely participate in public life.

[8-10 feet is the preferred width to accommodate both pedestrian and bicycle traffic.]



This well constructed and landscaped section of Warwick Boulevard is located outside of the study between Oyster Point Road and Maxwell Lane.

The removal of overhead utilities and proposed sidewalk improvements are part of the infrastructure aspect of urban design. Sidewalks can be much more than concrete strips. More than just necessities for pedestrians, they should provide pleasant places to walk and linger to observe adjacent features. They can include brick or stone pavers to improve their appearance. When increased in width and landscaped they become amenities for use by residents and visitors alike. Sidewalks also link one activity center to another and relieve traffic congestion by encouraging people to walk rather than drive. Maintenance is required and must be at as high a standard as can be agreed upon by the citizens and sustained by the City's budget.

Crosswalks



This photo reflects the current condition of a representative crosswalk. There is no defined pause area on the median for pedestrians crossing the roadway.

*The corridor lacks well-defined and safe crosswalks as indicated in the photo above. Crosswalks along the corridor should be well defined utilizing various paving techniques. **Regular maintenance is required to make crosswalks identifiable year around.***

Crossings by pedestrians should be channeled to signalized intersections.

Crosswalks are mechanisms that help interconnect the sidewalk network. Typically, crosswalks occur at intersections where pedestrian access is necessary within the paved right-of-way to link one sidewalk to another. Currently, there are marked pedestrian crosswalks at each intersection. However, in most instances, the crosswalks need realignment and improvement. Most, if not all, of the crosswalks are painted with boundary lines on the pavement; but, they need to be maintained properly.

Currently, the crosswalks traverse the intersection with no safe haven or place of opportunity to pause for oncoming traffic. Most median divided highways with crosswalks have “caps” at the ends of the median island that function as a safe pause area. These areas provide the pedestrian with a safe area to stop between traffic. In addition, these pause areas provide relief to disabled pedestrians who need extra time to cross the intersection.



Photo – Integrated Paving Concepts

Transit Stops

The corridor's primary source of public transit is the Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) system. The route has many transit stops that are along the corridor, that need to be studied for their location effectiveness. Many of HRT's stops do not have bus shelter access which may be discouraging potential HRT riders. This study recommends that HRT and the City conduct an assessment of the corridor's transit stops and their bus shelter facilities. The existing shelters are outdated, in need of repair and maintenance, and in some cases, need relocation. The City, working with HRT, should pursue an upgrade to these facilities.

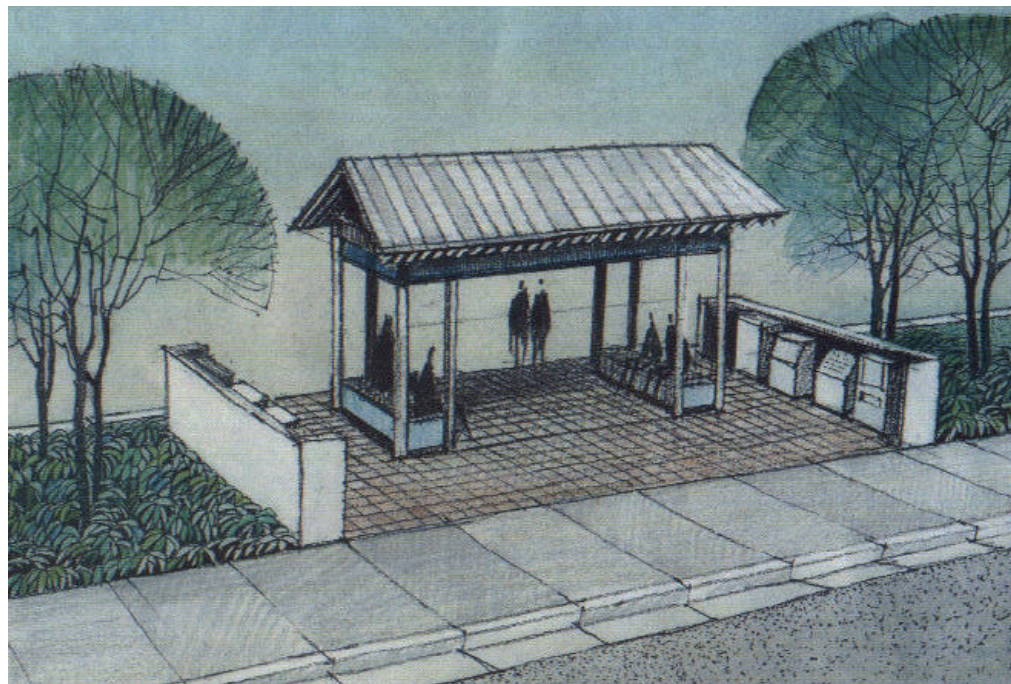


Standard Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) shelter

The conceptual transit stop design shown on the next page incorporates a convenient, safe, and aesthetically pleasing shelter area to wait for public transit access. The shelter also incorporates ancillary facilities such as newspaper boxes, trash receptacles, and transit-related fixtures.

Properly designed shelters as shown here are important not only from a design and corridor improvement perspective, but they also convey to citizens the community's commitment to public transit.

***Properly designed shelters
convey to citizens the
community's commitment to
public transit***



Conceptual transit stop design Warwick Blvd. - Carlton Abbott & Partners P.C.

To facilitate public transit and relieve traffic congestion, bus “pull offs” or “stop lanes” for buses should be utilized to provide safe access and allow for the continuation of traffic flow. These “pull offs” could be integrated into the existing roadway network. In cooperation with the City of Newport News Department of Engineering, the Planning Department, and HRT, this concept could be implemented incrementally at select transit locations. Because planned roadway improvements are decades away, traffic congestion will become a more challenging issue. Consequently, strategies to mitigate the traffic issues will demand greater attention. Bus “pull offs” will help mitigate existing traffic congestion as a component of an overall congestion relief strategy.

Curbing

Curbing functions as a facilitator for stormwater drainage, a marker for the edge of pavement, a barrier between sidewalks and the roadway, and helps define travel ways and parking areas. Curbing, like in most urban/suburban communities, is in constant need of repair. Broken and missing curbing is very noticeable in the study area. Some curbing has been painted yellow in an effort to prevent drivers from driving over them. Major arterial roadways require curb and gutter treatments.

It appears that some curbing along median edges may not be properly aligned with the roadway, in particular between Beechmont Road and Fort Eustis Boulevard. In other cases, the median has no curbing whatsoever. This causes storm water runoff problems and encourages traffic to drive onto landscaped areas. Curbing also defines an area so that the motorist or pedestrian knows the function of areas. Some areas within the right-of-way are designed to discourage pedestrians and motorists. Other areas help define space where vehicular and pedestrian traffic are welcomed.



Area with no curbing with tattered edge/poor drainage



Area with curb and gutter treatment near Young's Mill

LANDSCAPING



This right-of-way area near Beechmont Road is devoid of any landscape treatments.

In general, landscaping within the City's right-of-way is sparse and could be improved. Aside from mediocre landscape treatments within the medians and on some existing parcels, there is no landscaping.

Landscaping is considered a major component of any corridor. Trees, shrubs, flowers, grass, open areas, and landscaped berms, can define a corridor and give it a sense of place. Landscaping can also screen unsightly development, or used to complement the frontage of a business. Professional landscape treatment in the study area is generally lacking. Appropriate green area enhances the streetscape and may assist in the control of stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces.

Landscaping along the corridor's right-of-way varies depending on the particular segment. The following describes the current conditions:

- *Menchville Road to Lucas Creek Road:* The landscaping within this segment is older, mature, and varied. However, the quality and condition of trees and shrubs are mixed. The trees are mostly Crepe Myrtles with a Juniper base with other areas containing Holly bushes.
- *Lucas Creek Road north to Ft. Eustis Boulevard:* This segment needs the greatest improvement. There is a noticeable absence of landscaping on either side of the right-of-way between the roadway and the adjacent development. The medians in this area have some trees (Linden trees); however, they are diseased, cracked, and badly in need of replacement. Based upon preliminary soil tests, it appears that the soil conditions within the median are poor, thereby creating conditions that are difficult for any landscaping to survive. The soils are comprised of mostly clay, rocks, and compacted soil that most likely were the construction by-product from the road widening in the 1980s. Little effort to improve this situation has led to a "run down" appearance. Trees are not complemented by other landscape treatments, and grassy areas appear to be unkempt. The landscaping in the median also lacks a theme, resulting in a lack of identity for this segment of the corridor.

Corridor Landscape Planting



Existing trees incorporated into landscaping within Study area

The streetscape landscape design should enhance the natural environment of the corridor. Indigenous planting material that is well adapted to local climatic conditions and will require only supplemental irrigation should be used where possible.

The use of plant material is one of the simplest and most effective means to achieve a positive impact on the streetscape setting. Plant material provides many environmental benefits including shade, climate modification, air purification, erosion control, and glare reduction. Plant material can be an effective visual screen and provide a psychological buffer between traffic and adjacent uses. Plants provide color and visual variety and can effectively reinforce or establish scale for pedestrian settings and vehicular settings. The following are general guidelines for landscaping along the corridor:

- Trees and other plantings should be of an appropriate scale in relation to the corridor width to help define and reinforce the streetscape hierarchy.
- Trees should be used in repetitive patterns to help establish streetscape continuity and differentiate between various types of streets. Formal rows provide a uniform and orderly appearance, which can strengthen the streetscape image; however, the loss of individual specimens due to disease or accident is often apparent and difficult to remedy.
- Informal planting patterns provide a less orderly image, but groupings that are repeated in their general composition and arrangement can still reinforce and strengthen the streetscape hierarchy. Subsequently, the loss of individual specimens in plant groupings is less disruptive to the overall appearance of the streetscape and is easier to remedy.
- The streetscape landscape design should be closely coordinated with existing utilities and plans for future utilities to avoid maintenance and repair problems such as interference with overhead electrical lines and damage to underground water or sewer lines. Coordinating location in relation to utilities can also lessen the potential for damage to the plant material associated with utility construction and maintenance projects.

- Trees should be selected and installed according to the height and spread they will achieve at maturity. This includes such considerations as the damage that may be inflicted to pavements from mature trunks and root systems, and the spacing and setbacks required accommodating mature canopies, which could potentially interfere with signs, lighting, and vehicular traffic.
- Ground cover and shrubs planted within the streetscape corridor should be low maintenance, especially in medians, where access is limited and maintenance operations can be hazardous or difficult. For the security and safety of pedestrians, shrubs should not obstruct views into or out of sidewalks, especially at street crossings.

“The use of landscape plant material is one of the simplest and most effective means to achieve a desirable impact on the streetscape setting”



Generally agreed to be one of the more scenic roadways in the City, this stretch of Warwick Boulevard is east, and outside, of the study area near Oyster Point Road.

Greening the Corridor

City policy supports 'greening' as a key component of development projects.

Landscaping is recommended throughout the corridor to beautify it and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors. Adding landscaping or “greening” is a widespread beautification strategy for most corridors. Landscaping contributes to the corridor by creating a sense of place. The reintroduction of street trees, shrubs, and plantings in key locations along the corridor will contribute to these improvements.

City policy supports ‘greening’ as a key component of development projects. All development and infrastructure improvements should incorporate a strong greening/public realm component. A linked network of open space and dedicated public parks will contribute immeasurably to the quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors. The revitalization of this corridor must also provide improved access to existing parks and regional recreational areas. The City should continue working with a landscape architect to develop a conceptual approach and construction plans and documents for implementation.



Nicely landscaped median outside study area near Maxwell Lane.

Landscape/Streetscape Plan



One of the major recommendations of this study is to improve the aesthetics of the corridor.

Landscaping, one of the major components of the corridor, has been identified as lacking both in quantity and quality. Landscaping treatments when properly implemented can have an immediate positive impact to a corridor and is typically the least expensive improvement to implement.

It is recommended that a comprehensive landscape plan be developed for the study segment of Warwick Boulevard. The landscape plan should encompass the *entire* public right-of-way. Specifically, landscape treatments such as shade and ornamental trees, complementary shrubs, and low ground covers should be installed. Additional improvements in this area are recommended as well. For example, seeding of grassy areas, the addition topsoil, mulching, and the re-grading of some areas within the right-of-way (and on private properties where needed) should be identified and improved as necessary. Many areas along the corridor need only minor landscape improvements that when addressed, will make significant impacts to the corridor in the aggregate. A properly designed and landscaped corridor will also help to guide the development process by encouraging tree planting and landscape treatments, effective lighting, coordination of signage, appropriate building orientation and facades, and rational access management.

The staff recommends preparation of a streetscape plan for the corridor or a strategic portion thereof. The purpose of the plan would be to create a landscape theme for the segment of the corridor under study. The landscape plan would replace and/or supplement the existing landscaping along the corridor (see conceptual design for Ashton Green Boulevard/Warwick Boulevard shown on pg. 83).

A volunteer committee consisting of the major stakeholders within the corridor may be formed to assist in the plan formulation and implementation processes. Grant funds through an Economic Development Initiative to implement such a plan have been initiated.

On-Site Landscaping

The landscape treatment of areas located outside of the right-of-way can enhance the visual character of the corridor. Develop landscape concept plans or themes for regional corridors to enable integration and consistency in all landscape plans of land owners adjacent to the road, and to facilitate coordination of landscaping within the right-of-way with that on private lands.

Include a variety of trees to safeguard against the impacts of disease related to individual species.

Continue requiring landscape plans as part of the design requirements for new or reconstructed roads, and as part of development applications for adjacent sites. Allow private developers to extend on-site landscaping into the right-of-way when desirable.

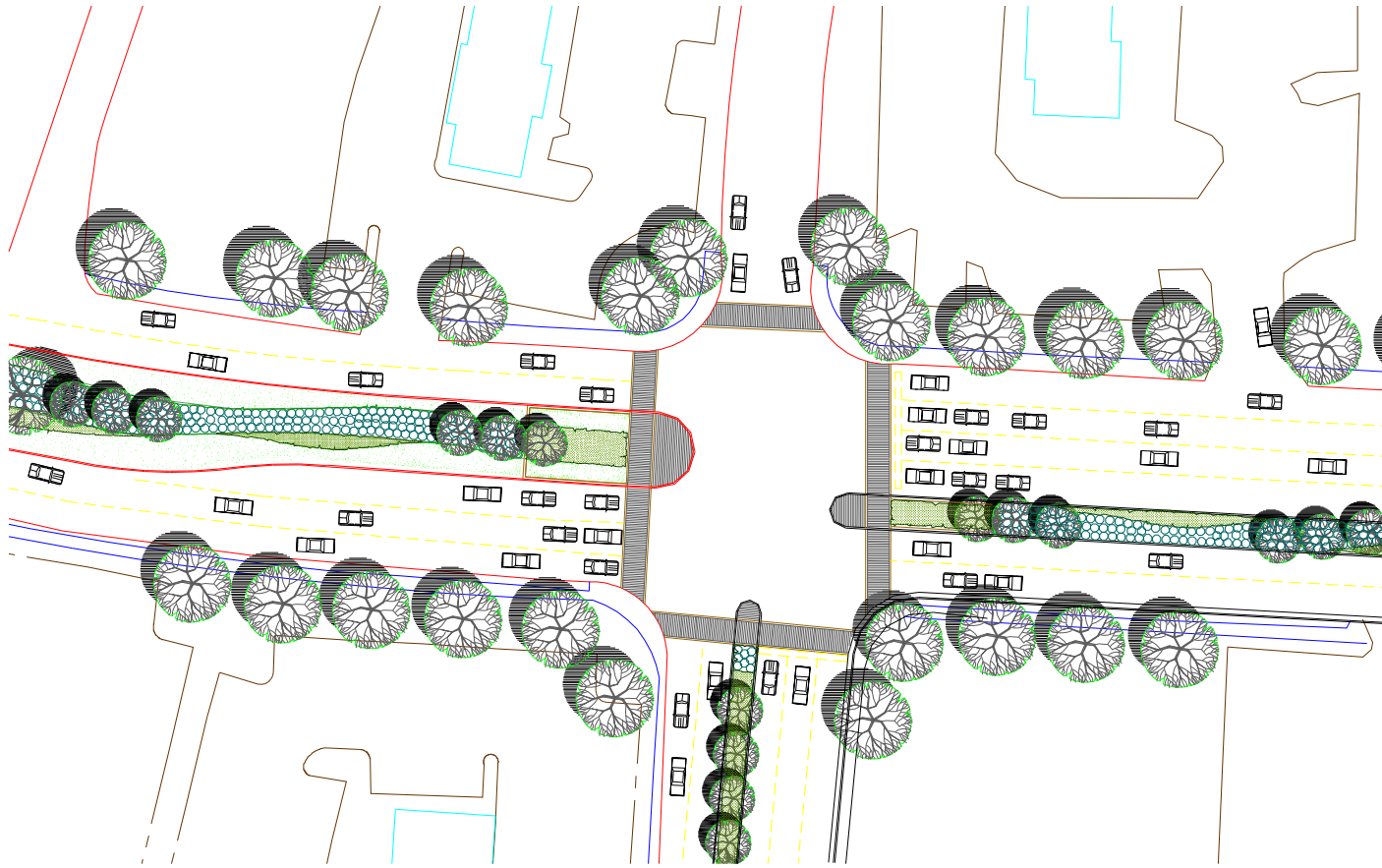
Coordinate on-site landscaping along the length of the corridor with sites on both sides of the road through Zoning, Site Plan, Condominium and Subdivision Approval.

The property owner recently landscaped both inside and outside of the right-of-way on this site near Beechmont. The removal of the overhead utility lines would greatly enhance this landscaping effort.





LANDSCAPE TREATMENT - Intersection Of Warwick and Ashton Green Boulevards



Landscape Treatment- Intersection of Warwick and Ashton Green Boulevards

Corridor Enhancements

As already noted, the corridor lacks adequate streetscape furnishings to facilitate pedestrian activity. Streetscape site furnishings are highly recommended to encourage pedestrian access to public transportation, retail centers, and connectivity to neighborhoods. Site furnishings, including such elements as benches, trash receptacles, bus shelters, kiosks, and street furniture, can improve the function of the streetscape and help unify and enhance its appearance (See conceptual transit stop design pg. 74). They also reinforce the streetscape hierarchy by helping define the role of the corridor, and they provide a human scale and balance to a vehicular-oriented environment. The following are recommendations that incorporate streetscape site furnishings into the corridor:

Streetscape

Streetscape site furnishings should be simple and functional in their design and complement the architectural character of the corridor. The same types of furnishings should be consistent in their design and use. Different types of site furnishings should be unified in their design by the use of common materials, finishes, and details.

Site Furnishings

Site furnishings should be coordinated in appearance with other streetscape elements such as light fixtures, public signs, and other fixtures in the right-of-way, and should be located based upon a demonstrated or anticipated need for their use. This is consistent with their role as the most prominent segments of the streetscape. However, depending on surrounding uses, not all areas warrant an equal level of treatment. As pedestrians navigate this segment of the corridor, particular attention to the types of site furnishings selected is needed to enhance the flow of movement to and from pedestrian facilities and public transportation.

Site furnishings should be placed adjacent to sidewalks, out of the flow of pedestrian traffic. Site furnishings should be clustered to avoid clutter, consolidate the space required, and group complementary functions.

Site Furnishings (cont.)

Seating areas should be located along the corridor's sidewalk edge farthest from the street and should be enhanced with landscape planting. Unsightly views should be screened and desirable views should be emphasized. Bus benches and shelters should be set back a minimum of four feet from the face of the curb. All site furnishings, including seating areas, tables, and phone booths, should be selected and sited to accommodate physically challenged individuals.

Site furnishings should be made of durable and low maintenance materials such as metal and concrete. A hard paving surface should surround each furnishing for ease of access and maintenance. Flagpoles, fountains, and monuments should be used selectively so as not to dilute their individual impact and sited in prominent locations to maximize their visibility.



Street Bench

Outside Storage

In some cases, outside storage is situated in front yards close to the edge of the right-of-way. Some retail operations depend upon outside displays to assist in selling their products. However, storage of materials, equipment, and vehicles should not be located in front yard areas visible from the right-of-way. Dumpsters should also be required to be enclosed (screened) and placed in locations not visible from the right-of-way.



An existing unscreened dumpster in front of a business

Protect Environmental Resources

Environmentally sensitive jurisdictional wetlands, floodplains, lakes, and streams should be taken into consideration when evaluating future improvements and should be considered "green infrastructure." Conservation easements and other tools such as, e.g., the Stoney Run Greenway Corridor Improvement Plan, should be used for the protection of such areas are recommended. Rezoning some locations to a park or open space district may be desirable to help protect natural resources.

As a development practice, the City should incorporate environmentally sustainable practices. All matters of sustainability, from stormwater management, to the use of recycled materials and the development of "healthy homes" and "green architecture," should be practiced in the corridor to further the area as a model for appropriate contemporary urban revitalization efforts.

Environmentally sensitive areas should be considered "green infrastructure."



The Stoney Run Sandpits

Recreational Opportunities

Citizens have complained that Denbigh lacks a community center and have noted the high utilization of the recently opened Midtown Community Center as evidence of need for this type of service. There are few public recreational opportunities in Denbigh. Once completed, the Stoney Run Park will provide soccer and baseball fields for seasonal organized events but will still leave a gap for those seeking year round activities that are not necessarily targeted towards youth athletics. It is strongly believed in the community that these opportunities for quality recreational activities will make great strides in addressing problems such as juvenile loitering and the associated societal ills.

“Citizens have expressed a strong desire for a community and/or recreation center to be located in the northern end of the city”

Citizens have expressed a strong desire for a community and/or recreation center to be located in the northern end of the city. It is viewed that such a facility would provide much needed recreational opportunities and community activities in a location that currently has little of either. The center would also aid in adding a definition of place and community focal point that is also an issue of concern. The opening of the Stoney Run Park on the site of the former city landfill will aid in this regard but will only provide outdoor athletic facilities and not a full range of community needs. A community center with indoor facilities similar to the city’s Midtown Community Center would be able to provide a wide range of activities throughout the year. Recently the City has designated a City owned parcel near Mary Passage Middle School to construct a recreation/community center.

Traffic

As indicated in the existing conditions, traffic in the corridor has increased steadily over the last three decades. In the 1980s, the City widened Warwick Boulevard from two lanes to four, from Beechmont Road to Ft. Eustis Boulevard. However, roadway improvements have not kept up with traffic demands. During peak hours traffic has reached a “C” and “D” level of service. The traffic problems have a detrimental effect on the corridors from many perspectives. From an economic stance, especially retail, high traffic counts can be a positive impact. Unfortunately, traffic counts that reduce the roadway’s level of service to “D” or below can actually hinder the City’s efforts to attract new development. Traffic problems can also hurt residential growth, property values, and resale. One of the primary residential location considerations is the commute to work. Traffic problems can be detrimental to a neighborhood’s appeal if it becomes difficult to access work and shopping in a timely and efficient manner. Transportation issues must be addressed in the future if revitalization efforts are to be successful.

The City should establish an “Access Management” policy to consolidate existing entrances, median openings, and curb cuts.



Afternoon traffic near intersection of Warwick Boulevard and Tabbs Lane

Excessive Entrances/Curb Cuts

Most parcels only need one entrance/exit to access the roadway. If designed properly, one entrance can accommodate both entering and exiting vehicles. Most commercial parcels on Warwick Boulevard however have more than one entrance. These extraneous curb cuts can increase traffic problems through stop and go traffic. Entrances too close to an intersection can be extremely dangerous. Unfortunately, over time, Warwick Boulevard has experienced considerable development that altered the number of entrances. The following recommendations can help increase safety and facilitate traffic flow:

Sharing points of ingress and egress, where possible, will reduce the number of turning movements, improve traffic flow, and decrease the potential for accidents. Shared access also diminishes the amount of pavement required and decreases the volume of stormwater runoff.

If curb cuts and median breaks are minimized, the opportunity for pedestrian, as well as vehicular accidents will decrease.



An example of a well defined median break (photo – Integrated Paving Concepts, www.streetprint.com)

Excessive Entrances/Curb Cuts (Cont.)

New entrances should be aligned with existing ones and provisions made for "stacking" of vehicles so that they may enter the road in a safe manner. New entrances in close proximity to road intersections should be avoided. Other measures, such as additional turn lanes, the consolidation of entrances, and pavement markings are important considerations.

The City's current requirement for the provision of a traffic impact analysis when vehicular trips per day exceed 5,000 trips should be lowered to 1,000. Requiring traffic impact studies for proposed commercial and residential developments that exceed 1,000 vehicular trips per day in a 24-hour period will help determine the need for roadway/access improvements on a case-by-case basis.

Pedestrian traffic can suffer too. In general, curb cuts are always dangerous for pedestrians because automobiles invade the pedestrian space of the sidewalk. Cyclists are endangered because of the additional automobile turning movements, which can be from either the right or the left.



Commercial gravel entrance

Lack of police presence and visual clutter

Both property and violent crime are seen as major problems in the area. Many survey respondents noted that during the mid-day hours little problem existed. However, during the evening hours and nighttime, a palpable feeling of insecurity existed. Loitering and panhandling in the area are common complaints. These problems, as well as their perceptions, are compounded when set in an environment of dilapidated structures and unkempt areas.

The citizen survey provides some observation and guidance in this area. Observations of truancy and unsupervised school age children seen in the area during school hours, lend to the perception of inadequate police patrols. Citizens noted loitering in parking areas and vacant lots as problems, particularly during the evening hours. Some businesses complained of the solicitation of prostitution on or near their property. Further lending to the perception of criminality and unease, citizens note an overall trashy appearance on the corridor caused by boarded up structures, random sign postings, litter, and occasional graffiti. Such visual blight is generally associated with areas that are uninviting or unsafe.



Visual Clutter

Code Enforcement

“Code violations are often identified as the single obstacle to the successful effort to improving commercial corridors”

Compliance with City Codes has been identified as one of the issues facing the aesthetic improvement and commercial revitalization of the corridor. Issues such as trash, illegal signage, upkeep and maintenance of structures, illegal land uses, public-right-of-way violations, and overall clutter were some of the major violations that were noted through public input into the study. It is known that City code violations are not uncommon for aging retail commercial corridors. In fact, code violations are often identified as the single obstacle to the successful effort to improving commercial corridors.



An illegal sign posted in the City's right-of-way

The Codes Compliance Department needs to take a vigilant stance against violators and needs to routinely issues warnings and summons to chronic violators. However, it is a difficult task for the limited

Code Enforcement (Cont.)

number of inspectors to keep pace with the violations because of the proliferation and number of violations in relation to the size of the staff. Currently there are only two property maintenance inspectors for the northern end of the City. Only one of these inspectors is available to patrol the study area at any given time. It is important to note that many of the corridor's aesthetic and maintenance issues, specifically private property, are managed through codes inspectors. At the current level of resources afforded to the Department of Codes Compliance, it will be difficult for the City to effectively make significant improvements in this critical area. It is a recommendation of this study that the City increase the number of Codes inspectors to allow the Codes Compliance Department to implement a higher degree of enforcement throughout the corridor. This action should be effectuated through a personnel increase proposal as part of the City's annual budgetary process and personnel allocations.

“It is a recommendation of this study that the City increase the number of Codes inspectors to allow the Codes Compliance Department to implement a higher degree of enforcement throughout the corridor.”

As the personnel resources become available, Code compliance will be in a better position to concentrate on a comprehensive effort to bring into compliance the problem properties. This will involve prioritizing the properties of concern, putting pressure on other City-related agencies to enforce the codes, keeping track of the progress of the code enforcement effort, using the judicial process, etc. It is also highly recommended that the community (including business owners) work in earnest to develop positive relationships with City code enforcement agencies and to become educated about the often-frustrating legal processes involved in cleaning up problem properties. Community activists will find that learning about the process will help them to have productive interactions with code enforcement agencies. Also, all City agencies involved in the effort should focus on developing relationships with property owners. This course is more likely to lead to improved property conditions over the long term; cooperation, rather than conflict, should be pursued as a matter of course.

On-Site Parking and Circulation



Underutilized parking area at Warwick Blvd. and Oriana Rd.

The treatment of parking areas has a key influence on the visual character of a corridor. Locate parking lots to the side or rear of buildings to mitigate their visual impact on the streetscape, to minimize the need for landscape screening, and to permit buildings to be located closer to the road.

- Screen parking lots that abut the corridor. This screening should include trees, shrubs, berms, and/or low fences, except within sight lines intersections. Low level screening should mitigate views of parked cars yet retain a sense of security for parking lot users.
- Design parking lots to be safe places. Ensure that parking areas are well lit and accessible from the roadway and from adjacent buildings with clear views. Ensure that parking lot screening does not interfere with the safety of the site.
- Include barrier free sidewalks within parking lots to accommodate pedestrians walking to the building entrance (interconnectivity). They can be combined with landscape strips and pedestrian scale lighting to assist in their delineation and to provide shaded areas in the parking lot.
- Provide sidewalks that connect buildings to the roadside sidewalk and transit stops. These should not be combined with vehicle driveways. Connect buildings and parking lots of adjacent properties with vehicle aisles and barrier free sidewalks to allow the off-road circulation of vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians between sites.
- Encourage shared parking lots to reduce overall parking requirements and to integrate adjacent uses.
- Locate loading, garbage, and other services so they are not visible from the road and provide appropriate screening.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

These recommendations call for specific and carefully coordinated actions to carry out the Warwick Boulevard Corridor Plan.

- Encourage future land development to be located in centralized, compact patterns rather than decentralized, sprawled patterns.
- Discourage strip commercial development along major traffic arteries unless specifically designated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Strive to protect recreational, natural areas and cultural attractions by restricting any development that might harm such attractions.
- Promote the historic character of Denbigh through the reuse of old buildings and new construction that accents that character.
- Support strong, functional neighborhoods through planning and land use regulations designed to encourage the stability of existing neighborhoods.
- Plan the development of new infill residential subdivisions around the neighborhood concept by developing new areas as neighborhoods within themselves, or by integrating them into established neighborhoods.
- Construct infrastructure as needed to ensure orderly and efficient infrastructure systems.
- Promote balanced economic growth to generate adequate resources for high quality services.
- Encourage infill development through a mixture of land uses.

Commercial Redevelopment

The Urban Land Institute discusses key steps towards revitalization⁹... ➔

The majority of land along the Warwick Boulevard Corridor is zoned for commercial use. As a result, the supply of commercial property exceeds demand. This condition is illustrated by the high vacancy rate and the number of lower-tier retailers such as check cashing services and second-hand stores.

- Pare down excess commercial land in older strips to encourage reinvestment and improvement in existing retail properties.
- Scale retail zoned land to reflect a realistic assessment of the size, strength and character of the market as reflected in the demographic analysis.
- Stimulate infill, new forms of mixed use, and pedestrian oriented retail development on remaining retail zoned land.
- Structure zoning in mature strips to encourage denser forms of development that can be reached by multiple access modes.
- Reserve some of the previously zoned retail land for housing, office space, civic uses recreational facilities and open space.
- Consolidate commercial development into centralized nodes at key locations along the corridor.

Commercial Strip Design and Redevelopment

Commercial strip developments on Warwick Boulevard can be revitalized and made more pedestrian and bicycle friendly by making it easier and more appealing for customers to access the strip development and to visit multiple stores within the strip once they are there. Many techniques are available to make these strips more pedestrian-oriented, attractive, and, hopefully, more active commercial areas. The most important strategy is to put a firm limit on the length of commercial strips and, instead of extending strips, allow commercial expansion at a greater depth and density.

⁹ Urban Land Institute, *Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Strips*, 2001

Commercial Strip Design and Redevelopment (cont.)

Balance economic vitality with quality of life issues. Successful urban environments consist of a mix of land uses, housing options, job opportunities and transit. Economic vitality must be reinforced throughout the corridor by promoting a balance of life-cycle housing, business development and recreational and “greening” opportunities, co-existing in close proximity to create thriving, safe and stable neighborhoods.

Other strategies for redeveloping commercial strips include:

- Add continuous sidewalks on both sides of the street to link shopping areas;
- Redesign the fronts of large parking lots and build small, closely spaced or attached storefronts with courtyard parking behind;
- Encourage a mix of housing within walking distance of strip malls;
- Create visually attractive and unified streetscapes by planting a continuous tree border along roadways;
- Consider creating an overlay district to enhance new proposals and protect existing development;
- Enhance pedestrian access by building sidewalks, and crosswalks throughout the area; remove barriers such as fences between shopping areas. Provide bicycle parking facilities at busy shopping centers;
- Make parking lots cooler to walk through by adding regularly spaced shade trees; and
- Target strategic public improvements to leverage private investment.

Significant public investments are recommended for this corridor that are targeted toward infrastructure and streetscape improvements, environmental clean-up, and land assembly activities. Private development often follows the lead of these public improvement projects. It is crucial that the City continue to join forces with private investors to more effectively identify key development sites and other opportunities to maximize investment decisions in support of the revitalization recommendations and strategies outlined in this study.

Vacant Store Fronts



The majority of the Denbigh area was developed in the 1970s and '80s and followed a strip commercial center pattern. These commercial centers have two or more large anchor stores and several subordinate stores. Most were built to accommodate larger anchor-type uses that generally are occupied by chain stores. Newer commercial centers have substantially higher overhead costs than smaller and older commercial centers. Therefore, they are less likely to be able to find tenants from within the community when large spaces vacate. Despite the perceived advantage of newer construction, modern designs and close proximity to 44% of the City's population, these commercial centers have the highest vacancy rates in the City.

A start-up business is not likely to have the need or resources to sign a lease for a 40,000 square foot storefront. Therefore, these specialized commercial centers have a limited pool of potential tenants and are more at risk to economic fluctuations that are beyond their control. The large

Vacant Store Fronts (cont.)

vacancies created by the bankruptcy of Phar-Mor and Best Products are recent examples. Non-traditional uses have taken advantage of the large floor spaces that are available at discounted rents. A recent example is the former Rack-n-Sack Shopping Center that was purchased in its entirety by a church. This redevelopment effectively reduces the surplus of commercially zoned land in the area but also reduces the city's tax roles.

The shopping centers in Denbigh enjoyed moderate success until the early 1990s when the retailing standard shifted to favoring concentrations of warehouse type stores on Jefferson Avenue in the Oyster Point area. Competition from these stores forced closing of anchor stores in many shopping centers. The newer Jefferson Corridor is a retail juggernaut that contains 2.6 million square feet of retail floor space and 259 individual units. This represents 44% of all shopping center floor space in the City. The average assessed value per square foot is \$79.32, which is more than 2½ times that of other areas in the city. It is fair to assume that an area generating substantial trade will pull revenue from other retail districts.

“The challenges of reinvigorating a marginal or sub-marginal commercial strip are among the greatest in the planning profession.”

The degree to which competition from the Jefferson Avenue corridor pulls business away from centers in the Denbigh area is beyond the scope of this report. Yet anecdotal evidence indicates that businesses prefer a Jefferson corridor location. Several stores have vacated commercial centers in Denbigh in favor of Jefferson Corridor locations.

The challenges of reinvigorating a marginal or sub-marginal commercial strip are among the greatest in the planning profession according to experts cited in an article published in the October, 2002 issue of Governing Magazine. Difficult issues such as multiple property owners

Vacant Store Fronts (cont.)

“Poor aesthetics created by boarded-up buildings and stark surroundings generate a palpable feeling of apprehension towards an area.”

who usually have conflicting interests, is just the beginning. A surplus of commercially zoned land creates a situation where it becomes easier to relocate than to renovate. The worst of these parcels become vacated with little hope for improvement. These cycles of disinvestments continue until either the new land supply is exhausted and land recycling becomes a forced issue, or effective steps are taken to increase the value of an area and to stem the degradation. While the City itself is nearing build-out at 92% developed, the surrounding counties have abundant open space and are aggressively pursuing their development options. Therefore, the only options available to the City are to implement an effective strategy of revitalization and renewal, or remain idle and allow continued decay.

A favored term used by realtors to describe marketability of a property is “curb appeal.” This is an evaluation of the general aesthetics and how they attract or repulse potential clients. The means of property evaluation can be applied to an entire area. Poor aesthetics created by boarded-up buildings and stark surroundings generate a palpable feeling of apprehension towards an area. This tension can, and often does, adversely impact surrounding neighborhoods. Given alternatives, investors will bypass an unpleasant environment for an area deemed more suitable.

Implementation and Role of City Government

The role of the City of Newport News must be financial and comprehensive in its effort. City Government is responsible for funding the majority of improvements to, and maintenance of, rights-of-way, public spaces and facilities. The City has the ability to institute new signage criteria and control its rights-of-ways, incorporating appropriate landscaping, pedestrian facilities, street, directional, and identification signage. Supporting quality commercial appearance through landscaping, fencing, and gateways, as well as enforcement of applicable codes and ordinances are other roles the City can play. Coordination with the private sector may be needed to fund the Stoney Run Village concept, gateways, and improvements recommended to private properties that will provide the desired identity and sense of place. The City must be prepared to require, and even assist with funding the relocation of utility lines.

To begin the aesthetic transformation (and ultimately the total revitalization), public funding will be necessary. Similar to the City's success with the Jefferson Avenue commercial corridor, the Warwick Boulevard corridor will benefit from public infrastructure improvements. However, budget constraints may limit the City's timing to implement the recommendations. Therefore the improvements in the study must be coordinated in a phased strategy to realize long-term improvements.

PHASE I

\$2.5 Million - Initial Phase of Improvements

Appropriate funding for the intersection, median, and right-of-way improvements to a strategically targeted area along the corridor north of Beechmont Drive (this area has been singled out as in need of improvements). Initial estimates indicate that approximately \$2.5 Million dollars in appropriation would provide the necessary capital to initiate a corridor improvement plan. The targeted area would include landscaping, streetscape, lighting, crosswalks, and median improvements and enhancements, screening of utilities, and other right-

of-way improvements consistent with landscape plans and recommendations included in this report. Of course, a more detailed description of improvements will be needed prior to embarking on any public improvement process and expenditure of City funds. Depending on the extent of improvements needed, the targeted section could consist of approximately two to three City blocks including an intersection, adjoining medians, and the right-of-way. Phase I would need immediate Council appropriation to continue the momentum that began with the initiation of this study.

PHASE II

This phase would focus on the non-infrastructure improvements recommended in the study. These include such things as working with the private sector to establish a business association, seeking funding for more codes inspectors, evaluating City Ordinances to facilitate aesthetic improvements, increases in funding for maintenance, etc. It is important to note that this phase could occur simultaneously with those improvements undertaken in Phase I. Since these improvements mostly include “soft” costs, they would not necessarily be part of any initial funding appropriation, but would be funding separately through CIP monies, personnel budgets (increase in number of inspectors), and staff time.

PHASE III

Depending on the results and the costs of the Phase I implementation, Phase III could move forward by securing funding for additional right-of-way improvements that would be completed in a similar fashion as Phase I. Phase III, however, could include long-range recommendations such as placing utilities underground, roadway improvements (e.g., improving turn lanes, access management, median changes, etc.), and widening Warwick Boulevard from four lanes to six included turning lanes.

Public Support

Part of any implementation effort, especially long-range public improvement initiatives, is creating an awareness of existing issues and fostering a team environment to implement the recommendations. All City sponsored improvements require public support to bring about

long-term results. In fact, when the City partners with the public as part of the implementation process, the likelihood of a successful implementation effort increases. As the initial phases of improvements begin, City staff may find ways to involve citizens in helping to implement this revitalization effort.

Broader Scope/Further Analysis

This purpose of this study is to analyze the existing conditions of the corridor, identify the issues and opportunities, and make recommendations on how to improve the corridor's overall health. However, corridors are not an entity unto themselves; rather, they are intrinsically linked to the surrounding supporting land uses and community facilities. The land uses along the corridor, the adjacent residential neighborhoods, community facilities, infrastructure, environmental concerns, transportation networks and transit facilities as well as other commercial establishments that are not along the corridor are all inter-dependant. Each is a component of the larger whole. Therefore, the vitality of the corridor depends on the health of each component.

To effectively implement the recommendations of the study and to fully revitalize the corridor, the surrounding land uses as well as other components of the study area need further analysis. For example, aging housing, traffic, infrastructure, crime, supporting public facilities, transit services, and environmental issues, all need further analysis. This study recommends that the above-mentioned corridor components, as well as others identified through further analysis, be studied in-depth to determine the need for strategic improvements and support within their respective areas.

TARGETED RECOMMENDATION

Mixed Use Village Proposal – An Infill in the Stoney Run Area



A mixed-use village is proposed for property located at the corner of Oriana Road and Warwick Boulevard (See Stoney Run Village on pg. 107). Currently located on the site are the Big K department store, Food Lion, and other small retail shops. Several large footprint units sit vacant. This area is of particular interest because of its location, potential for redevelopment, access to public transportation, its proximity to Stoney Run Park, and its acreage. The properties encompass several large parcels that potentially could be prime redevelopment opportunities. While the corridor is still considered a major retail area for the northern end of the City, conventional automobile-oriented development patterns have created a nondescript identity typical to many suburban commercial strips.

A representative village concept is demonstrated within a 50+ acre area located in the heart of Denbigh. For many years it served as the city's primary commercial shopping center along the corridor. As the corridor began to age, the City understood the need to look at potential redevelopment opportunities. Consistent with citizen input from several public meetings, the City recognized the need for a new vision for this area. Consequently, the city has initiated a concept that incorporates new urbanism and neo-traditional approaches to create a small village center that is pedestrian and transit friendly and will reestablish the area as a primary focal point within the community.

Mixed-use buildings would allow for commercial activity on the ground floor with residences or offices above and higher density housing (i.e., two to three stories) with mixed styles targeting diverse income levels. Referred to as live/work buildings, this type of development helps maintain the neighborhood scale. These types of buildings also ensure round the clock activity for added safety. Construction of buildings along the Warwick Boulevard frontage will define the space of an urban corridor. These structures would include awnings or arcades to provide shaded sidewalks for pedestrians. Promoting a mixed use village in this area would help ensure a diversified, sustainable economic condition.

The mixed-use center will have an increased density and provide a healthy balance of housing, working, shopping, recreation and institutional uses.

As shown on the Stoney Run Village photo on the following page, one of the key elements of the idea is that it could transform Stoney Run Creek (ultimately Stoney Run Greenway) into a significant park and water amenity with ponds, wetlands, public gardens, trails, native plantings, restoration of natural habitat and public gathering places. The creek could become a community focal point, with all redevelopment oriented around the creek (currently Stoney Run Sand Pits) and the new Stoney Run Park.

This new mixed-use development will revitalize Stoney Run Village by creating a vibrant, welcoming and pedestrian-friendly area. The village concept could encourage the development of compact centers that focus and complement the surrounding neighborhoods – centers that are supported by existing and planned road networks constructed in response to traffic demands of both the auto and the pedestrian. The Stoney Run Village concept would place the mixed-use core in the center of the property, away from the street and intersection. This shift permits the center to function as a true pedestrian-friendly environment as well as maintain the efficiency of the intersection and roadway.

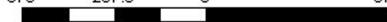
Implementation

To implement this ambitious concept, the City would have to be the primary entity to engage in securing (marketing) the property, possibly with the establishment of a public/private partnership. At that time, the partnership could solicit mixed-use concept submittals from potential design firms to incorporate the mixed-use concept with its surroundings. Private investment in the concept is welcomed and the site could be developed solely with private funds. In any case, a team of stakeholders would be established to ensure the implementation of the concept.



STONEY RUN VILLAGE

575 287.5 0 575 Feet



APPENDIX – A



WARWICK BOULEVARD CORRIDOR SURVEY (RESULTS)

1. Which of the following statements more closely reflects your opinion of the Warwick Boulevard Corridor?

32.3% I am satisfied with the existing business climate and appearance of the Warwick Boulevard Corridor.

67.1% I am not satisfied with the existing business climate and appearance of the Warwick Boulevard Corridor.

2. Please rank whether the following factors should be considered in future corridor improvement initiatives.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Landscape Design	64.4%	24.5%	6.4%
Improved Code Compliance	42.0%	35.1%	9.0%
Public Safety	66.0%	17.0%	8.0%
Revitalization	63.8%	21.9%	4.0%
Traffic Management	65.4%	21.3%	1.6%

3. What changes to the corridor, if any, would be most beneficial to your business/property?

(Please check only three.)

46 Quality new construction	58 Improved landscaping	52 Removal of overhead utilities
17 Combining driveway entrances	75 Improved lighting	86 Reduction of vacant buildings
63 Renovate existing Buildings	22 Improved pedestrian access	58 Improved landscaping
33 More green space	50 More attractive signage	17 Other (See Comments)
	93 Improved traffic flow	

4. Do you feel that the corridor is a safe location to shop?

☐ Yes 51.9% ☐ No 25.9% ☐ Not sure 22.2%

5. What action do you feel needs to be taken to increase public safety in the corridor?

(Check all that apply.)

96 Improved landscaping and lighting	111 Increased police presence	23 No measures are needed
49 Building maintenance	49 Pedestrian walkways	15 Other (See Comments)

6. How do you view the overall cleanliness and appearance of the Warwick Boulevard Corridor?

3.3% Superior	48.4% Needs some improvement
31.5% Acceptable	16.3% Needs great improvement

7. Do you feel there is too much commercially zoned property along the corridor?

13.4% Yes	71.1% No	15.5% Not sure
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8. Where could landscaping improvements be most beneficial along the corridor? (Please check one.)

30.3% Pedestrian walkways	28.3% Private property	2.8% Other (See Comments)
24.8% Medians	13.8% No improvements needed	

9. Which statement is true concerning your business/property?

75.0% I plan to continue ownership of my business/property.
11.8% I plan to make improvements to my existing business/property.
3.9% I am considering relocating my business to another location along the corridor.
9.2% I am considering selling my property or relocating my business outside the corridor.

10. How long have you leased or owned a business/ property along the Warwick Boulevard Corridor?

44.8% 0 - 10 years	28.2% 11 - 20 years	27.0% 20 + years
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11. What is your affiliation with the Warwick Boulevard Corridor? (Please check all that apply.)

11.0% Property owner

62.4% Business owner

2.2% Resident

24.3% More than one

12. What do you feel the city could do to enhance the business climate?

13. Would you like to be contacted about future corridor improvement initiatives?

☐ Yes (Please give any contact information below.)

☐ No

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

14. We welcome additional comments: _____

THANK YOU!



NEWPORT NEWS
DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT

Each returned survey was given a number and comments are noted for each individual survey. NA denotes a survey with no comments.

1. Improve road conditions and traffic patterns. Cut down on traffic congestion (12).
2. Better control of crime (3L). Reduce Crime. More Police Protection (12). I hear people say everyday that 'I don't want to live in Denbigh because of the crime.' That is sad. It used to be such a nice place (14).
3. No change [is necessary to the corridor] (3L, 12).
4. NA
5. NA
6. Update existing buildings. [Find] tenants for vacated buildings...Hills, Montgomery Wards, etc. Make bus stop area improvements; remove trash and make more park-like (12).
7. NA
8. NA
9. NA
10. Needs more improvements (12).
11. NA
12. Expand Code to allow good business to replace vacant lots and buildings (3L). I actually think [the city] does a good job now. I would like to see the City be more agreeable with New Business as the try to become taxpayers, so we can keep cost down (12). The highest and best use of [corridor] property is for Commercial Business. Residents should be offered incentives to re-locate (14).
13. [The city should offer] tax incentives to locate there. Also additional benefits such as low interest rate loans to improve and occupy an existing building (12).
14. [Use] local police Bike or Hoover [to increase public safety] (5F). Lighten up on temporary signage, such as Sales and Grand Opening, etc. (12). Closing of well-established businesses for widening is inexcusable! Let's think next time. Interstate access near Denbigh Blvd. would help (14).
15. Try to lure big businesses into vacant shopping centers. This will cut down on the 'hanging out' problem and will prevent more waste by keeping the buildings instead of tearing them down to make a new building (12).

16. Investigation [needed] for some business perhaps used for illegal purposes –Stoneybrook Shopping Center (5F).
17. Find people/ business to occupy vacant buildings (3L). During the Day I have no problem shopping. At night I feel insecure (4). [The City] needs to develop a better public image [for the Corridor] because this area has a reputation for being bad. Develop and awareness of strengths and uniqueness in Denbigh (12). Jay walking at all times of the day and night as well as loitering around business at night increases the insecurity of the area. I've also noticed prostitutes between Bland and Colony n the late evenings [14].
18. NA
19. Revitalize low income housing (5F).
20. NA
21. Bury Utilities. Condemn and clean-up vacant lots' businesses. [Give] tax breaks/ low interest loans for current business expansion (12).
22. NA
23. Widen streets for future traffic (14).
24. [Utilize] bike police (5F). Control Vandalism and Vagrants (12).
25. [Make for] easier access to business on both sides of the street, perhaps, by making more turn lanes in place of medians (12). We were very pleased when you added an additional turn lane onto bland. It didn't take a long time to put it in, and it made a major improvement on traffic flow. Thank you! (14).
26. Renovate old buildings (12).
27. Work with small businesses that need help (12). Grass along sidewalks (14).
28. Build crossroads on Warwick Blvd to get traffic from Jefferson Ave to Warwick Blvd (12).
29. Keep road, walkways, and curbs clean and grass cut (12).
30. I'm pleased you are looking at improving this corridor. It is ugly with its assortment of buildings, signs, vacant businesses, lack of green space and overhead utilities (14).
31. Improve the appearance of existing businesses (12).
32. NA
33. Revitalize vacant shopping centers and empty buildings (12).

34. Each Business needs to take more pride in road front property! (12).
35. Decrease the size of shopping center parking lots, i.e. Kmart, and increase the green space (8C). Improve the traffic flow. Make the area more visually appealing and increase police presence (12).
36. Help clean up fronts of businesses with landscaping, etc. (12).
37. NA
38. Lower taxes (12).
39. Traffic conditions need to be improved. Synchronize the lights (12). The corridor is okay in my estimation. Keep streets in good shape and do not waste money trying to accomplish the impossible. Pressure property owners to improve their appearance (14).
40. Market or find developer/leasing agent to aggressively fill empty buildings. The center at Maxwell Lane and Warwick is a perfect example of a 100% turnaround (12).
41. NA
42. More open green space and less trees (3J). More Police (12).
43. Stop people from loitering (12). Too many people just hanging out in the parking lots for no reason. They need to be moved along by the P.D. (14).
44. Renovate buildings that can be renovated and tear down buildings that cannot. Get more interesting businesses within the Corridor and knock out all the thugs that hang around the streets at night (12).
45. [There is a] hodgepodge of buildings that don't compliment each other (3L).
46. NA
47. Increase the police presence (12). The criminal element is still very noticeable or felt after 7:00 pm in the area from Denbigh and Courthouse Road to Bland at Warwick (14).
48. [The business climate of the Corridor] is fine (12).
49. NA
50. Improve the transition between road, curb, gutters, and driveways (14).
51. [Landscaping improvements can be used along] abandoned commercial property (8C). Make commercial business property owners update and cleanup unused commercial property (12).
52. No Change [is needed to the Corridor] (3L, 12).
53. NA

54. Do not run the new entrance exist [at Ft. Eustis] across a swamp. This will put me out of business and I will loose value in my property (3L). Attract businesses and companies to utilize vacant properties (12). Creating a new entrance and exist at Ft. Eustis through the swamp [creek], can be avoided by moving it across hard ground, which will avoid putting the affected business's out of business (14).
55. Enforce Speed limit (3L). Pedestrian's need to obey the law (5F). Require some face-lifting of buildings and properties (12). The Corridor need's to entice family restaurants in opening business. The Corridor needs a hardware store (14).
56. NA
57. NA
58. NA
59. Widen the road (5F). Bring more business clients to this corridor and build better shopping areas (12).
60. Trim grass along sidewalks and curbs (12). Good job with small business (14).
61. NA
62. Make less restrictive zoning laws (12).
63. NA
64. Get rid of empty lots and aim for more attractive property (12). Warwick Blvd is a very bad area as far as looks, safety, and traffic. You see everyday more buildings being built, and old ones left still empty. People come to this area for the beautiful trees and outdoors, but this ruins all of that (14).
65. Give tax incentives to large corporate business to fill up vacant shopping center buildings (12).
66. Reward property owners who make visual improvements without [the property] owners] increasing [rent] to tenants.
67. Greater police presence needed. Enforce no loitering in front of businesses and prevent kids from playing in parking lots (12).
68. The quality of commercial property is poor. Improve current buildings, signage, and landscaping (12).
69. NA
70. NA
71. NA
72. NA

73. Public Housing caused an influx in crime and drugs (5F). Fewer and more attractive automotive service stations' less neon/ bright signs. Strip development is unattractive. Above all lower the business tax. Somehow upgrade Ft. Eustis, Apple Apartments, and Aqueduct Neighborhoods (12). Thanks for your attention and effort to better this area (14).
74. Improve the flow of traffic from 4:00-7:00 pm. Drivers tend to block the traffic lights not allowing other cars to pass (12).
75. NA
76. Clean up the "ghetto" between Denbigh and Ft. Eustis. The Commercial property is abandoned, filthy, old, and blighted, negatively affecting retail owners (12). Force the property owners to clean up their storefronts (14).
77. Maintain trees from Beechmont to Ft. Eustis. They are dying and not growing (8c). Reduce inner-city type businesses such as pawnshops and money changing check cashing/labor pool businesses. Also, reduce the number of storefront churches (12). The corridor from Beechmont to Ft. Eustis could be greatly improved eliminating vacant buildings or enforcing current codes on appearance and outside storage. Also removal of above ground utilities. Lastly, I would like to see more beautification of green areas (14).
78. Provide better protection of the residents (12).
79. Keep grass and weeds cut (2). Remove Junk Cars (6). Good Luck (14).
80. Increase safety at nights in parking lots (12).
81. Newport News has forgotten us on Warwick Boulevard. We were bypassed for developing Jefferson Avenue. I understand growth but our area needs more traffic (14).
82. NA
83. NA
84. NA
85. NA
86. The section between Providence Church and Menchville Rd. is particularly unsightly (1B). Reduce Speed Limit to 35 mph between Menchville Rd. and Oyster Point/ Boxley. Fender benders are frequent here (2M). Pedestrian Walkways are needed Mennowood to the west side of Warwick (5E). The cleanliness is superior from Deep Creek Rd to Providence Church. Cleanliness needs improvement from Providence Church to Ft. Eustis Blvd (5). It is a commercial corridor; just

improve the appearance (7B). Landscaping improvements are needed on Private Property north of Providence Church (8B). The city should enforce codes by requiring fields to be mowed and by improving the appearance of existing businesses (12). Please retain the wide median when Warwick Blvd is widened to 6 lanes in the future.

87. Rid portions of the Corridor of drugs and prostitution (12). Had I known this portion of Warwick Boulevard was so highly concentrated with drugs and prostitution, I would have not considered this location (14).
88. Extend turn lanes at Denbigh (12)
89. Police patrols in shopping centers (front and rear). Out of control theft and vandalism. Removal of eyesores (12). Use the Jefferson Avenue Corridor from Denbigh to J. Clyde as an example for landscaping and property maintenance (14).
90. Improve traffic flow; improve appearance; decrease crime (12). Significant crime problem primarily due to public housing project across street from my business (14)
91. Financial incentives for renovations & landscaping. Reduce signage. Demolish older structures. Assemble land for re-development. Improve public safety through neighborhood policing and new storefront precincts (12). We need to reduce project based subsidized housing in the corridor (14).
92. n/a
93. Take proactive measures to reduce the number of vacant business properties/buildings. Help small businesses. (12). Develop a viable and reasonable plan and then implement it. (14).
94. Uniform street signage. Improve lighting. Bury utilities. Provide I-64 access from Warwick. (12)
95. Attract large department stores ie Sears or Wal-Mart (12)
96. n/a
97. Increased police presence (12)
98. n/a
99. Create superior looking architecture
100. Improve traffic light timing. Assist business owners in the purchase/renovation of vacant property.
101. n/a
102. n/a

103. n/a
104. n/a
105. n/a
106. Allow aggressive business advertising such as signs, banners, balloons. Less aggressive code enforcement (12). Perhaps the price for a main corridor is some untidiness. Where is a place that is nice, safe and allows businesses to thrive?(14)
107. Organize a group to assist the city in getting businesses to cooperate with any and all changes necessary to improve the image. (12) Commendation for taking this initiative (14)
108. Organize a regularly scheduled meeting of concerned parties similar to what Hampton does for Mercury Merchants & Hampton Roads Parkway. (12) The businesses in the Warwick corridor would greatly profit from a network of businesses that would cover pertinent issues(14).
109. Reduce crime prone population (5)
110. n/a
111. Area looks old and dated (5). Improve traffic flow (12).
112. Traffic re-alignment(12)
113. More lighting (12)
114. Revitalize Warwick to stop businesses from moving to Jefferson (12)
115. n/a
116. Need a new exit on Bland for I-64 (3, 12)
117. Greater police presence, better traffic flow (12)
118. Less used car lots (12)
119. n/a
120. n/a
121. Eliminate drugs/prostitutes (5,12)
122. n/a
123. n/a
124. Too much section 8 housing in close proximity to one another (12)
125. n/a

126. n/a
127. improve traffic flow (12)
128. Eliminate strip malls, used car dealerships, trailer sales, X-rated night clubs, attract more solid businesses, Do not remove any more trees. (12) Improve the bad image of Denbigh (14)
129. recruit businesses that suit community needs and that can survive in a slow economy (12)
130. Overall it just looks dirty and rundown (8)
131. Relax regulations in order to keep businesses here. Landscaping needs to be adequate but not the main focus – its not colonial Williamsburg (12).
132. n/a
133. n/a
134. n/a
135. n/a
136. make signage brighter and more attractive on existing establishments. Improve landscaping and clean up medians (12) Improve traffic flow (14)
137. n/a
138. improve traffic flow (12)
139. Get rid of eyesores. Bring everyone into compliance (12) Get rid of inoperable vehicles. Look at the 2001 aerial photos of the corridor and see the vehicles abandoned or parked on the edges of the wooded areas on unpaved surfaces. We need to have the repair shops and car lots clean up their acts. (14)
140. n/a
141. increased police presence (12)
142. n/a
143. Clean up apartments and make landlords change habits like Norfolk did in Oceanview.(12)
144. more business properties (12)
145. Pedestrian walkways, improved lighting and traffic management (12)
146. n/a
147. n/a

148. Clean up Warwick Blvd. It gets worse closer to Ft. Eustis (12)
149. Synchronize the stoplights (5) Traffic management, fix pot holes (12)
150. Reduce crime. Fill vacant shopping centers. Stop building new shopping centers (12)
151. n/a
152. Improve traffic flow (12)
153. n/a
154. Improve interstate access (12)
155. Feel safe only during the day while shopping (4) Improve traffic control, better street lights (12)
156. n/a
157. tear down or improve the old houses and businesses (12)
158. Close James River West Motel (5). Cut down on crime in Denbigh area in general, especially around Aqueduct area (12) Address prostitution problem around James River West Motel. See attached (14)
159. n/a
160. n/a
161. n/a
162. n/a
163. n/a
164. n/a
165. n/a
166. n/a
167. n/a
168. n/a
169. Improve traffic(12) Add traffic signal at Beechmont intersection for access to Midas area
170. n/a
171. Removal of low income housing or apartment complexes that are a detriment to businesses and residents (12)
172. Remove trees that are blocking our sign (3) Trees between light at Lee's Mill and the Safe Place need to be trimmed back so sign can be seen. (14)
173. n/a

174. More emphasis on public safety, particularly at night and evening hours. Maintain landscaping. Remove junk (12) Improve traffic flow (14)
175. n/a
176. n/a
177. n/a
178. Start a program to help business owners renovate existing buildings (12) We need more commercial buildings to lease with option to buy.
179. n/a
180. n/a
181. n/a
182. n/a
183. Fix stormwater drains from Stoneybrook to Beechmont. All are located on high ground (3)
184. Enforce aggressive driver law (5) Increase police patrols of strip malls. Enforce loitering laws. Address noise pollution from high wattage car stereos and faulty mufflers (12).
185. n/a
186. n/a
187. n/a
188. Offer tax incentives and micro loans for business site improvement. Police needs to investigate crime more aggressively (12). The buildings need renovation and some need removal in order to attract a better retail business owner.